AMAR CHITRA KATHA

THE ABDUCTION OF SITA

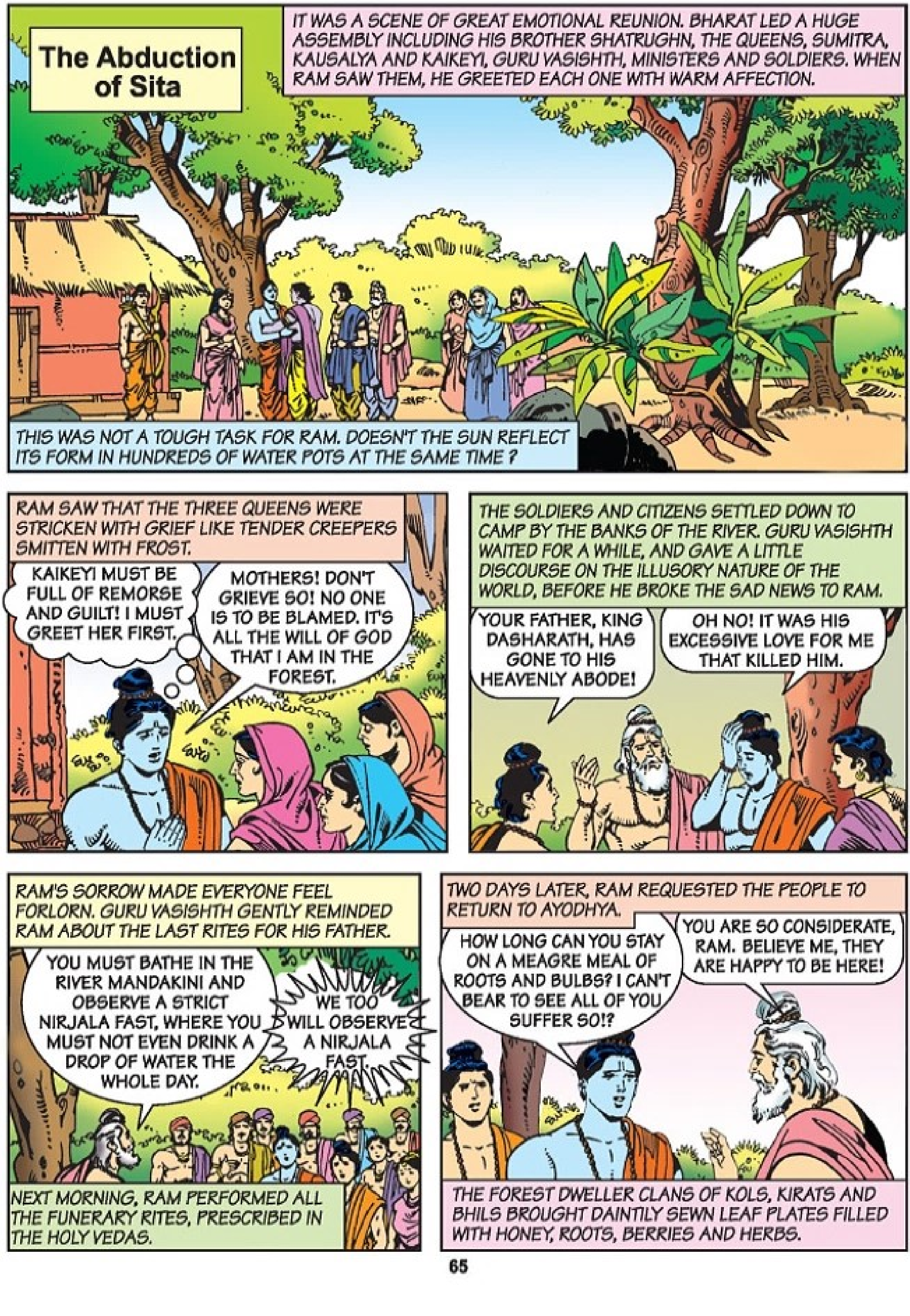
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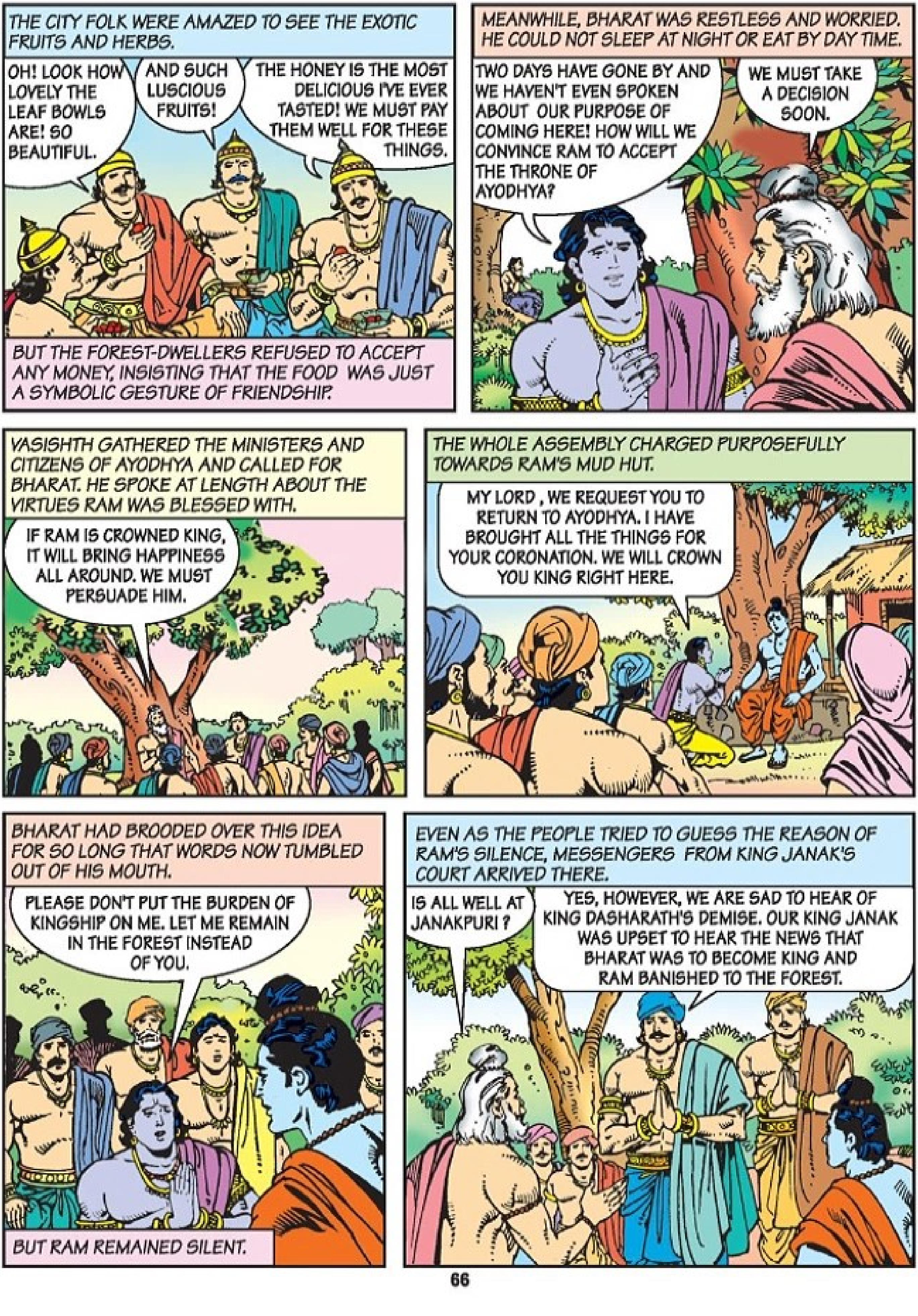


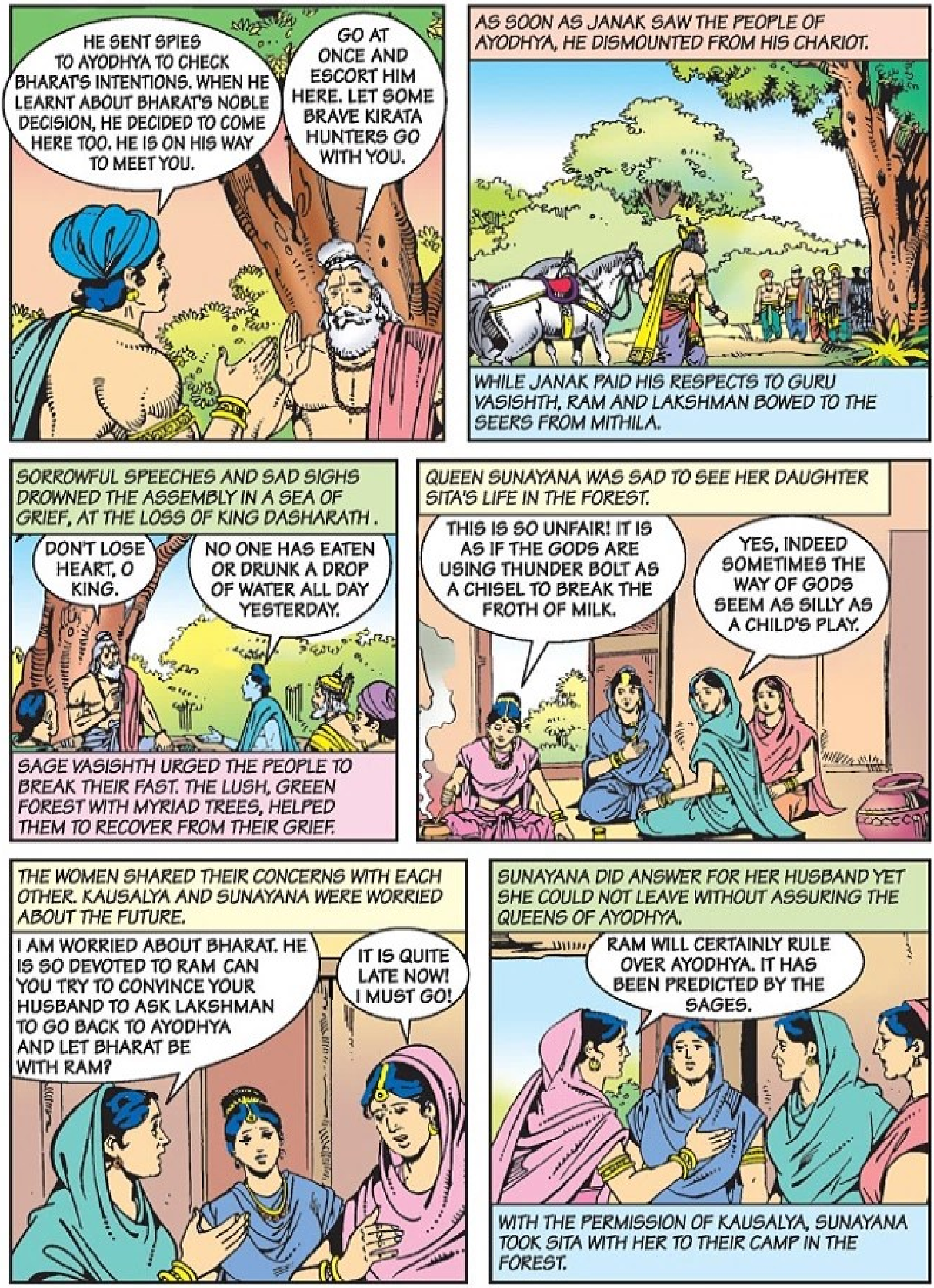
धीरज धर्म मित्र अरु नारी ।।
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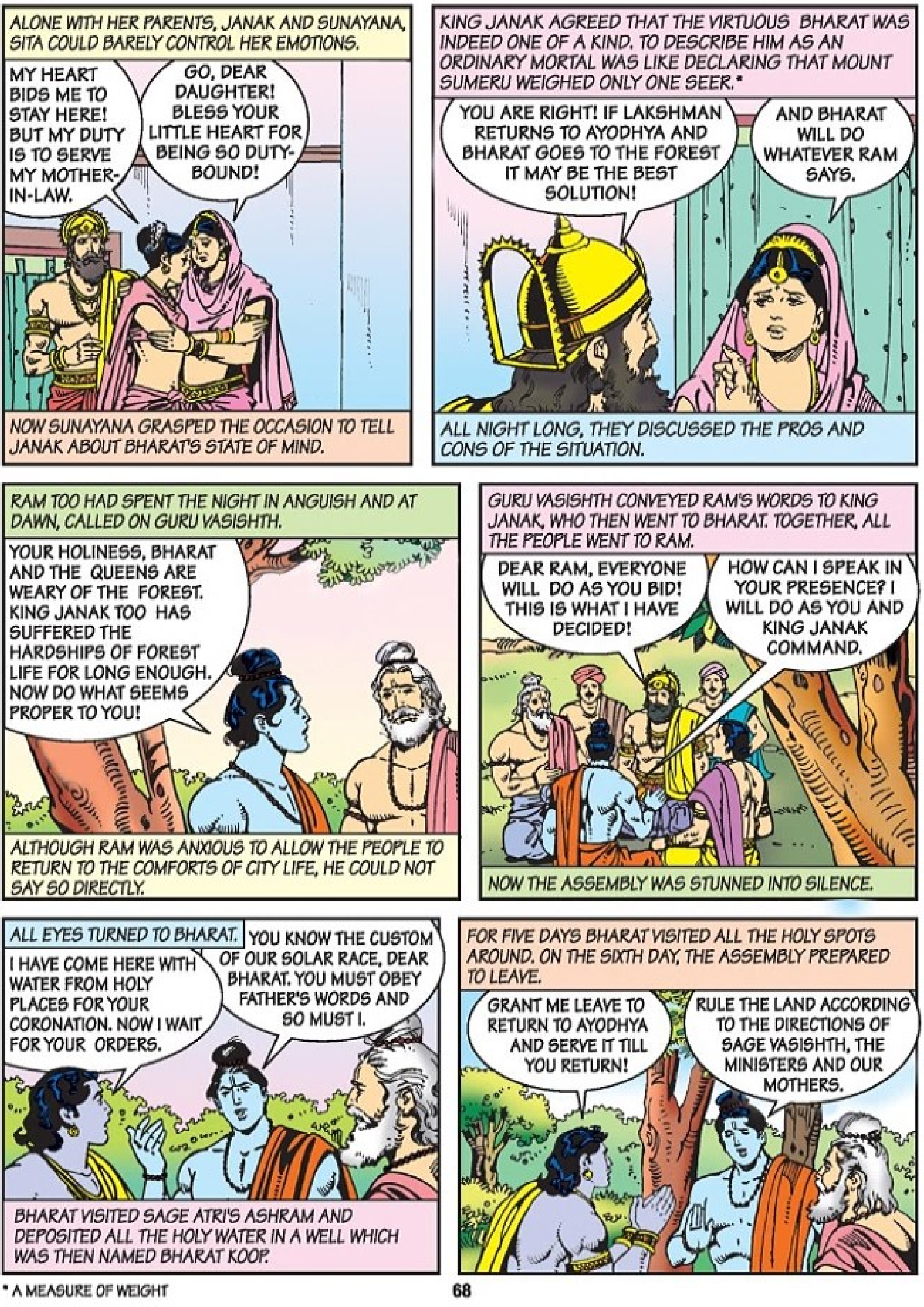
Fortitude, piety, friend and wife are put to test only during adversity.



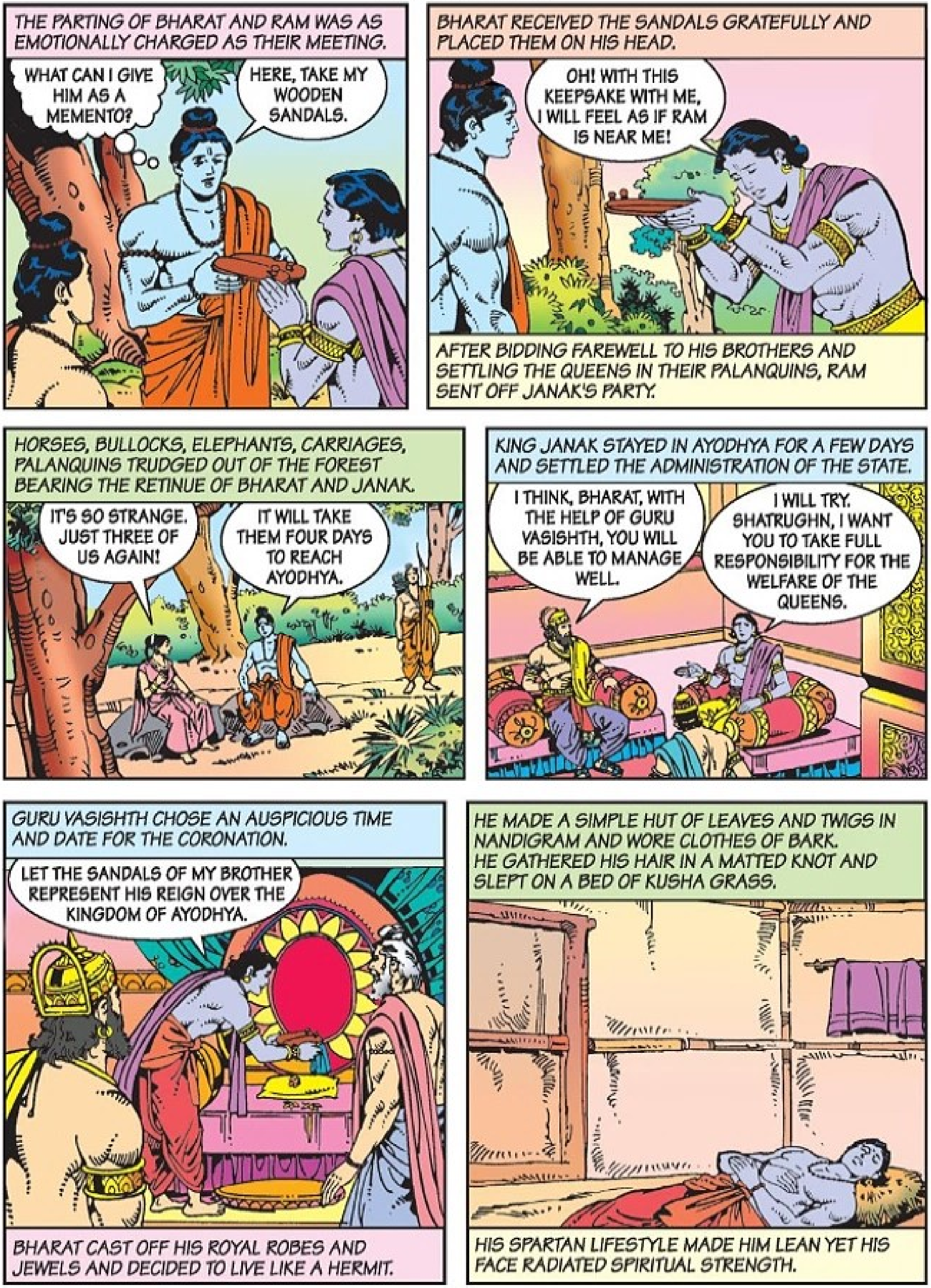

The Abduction of Sita
IT WAS A SCENE OF GREAT EMOTIONAL REUNION. BHARAT LED A HUGE ASSEMBLY INCLUDING HIS BROTHER SHATRUGHN, THE QUEENS, SUMITRA, KAUSALYA AND KAIKEYI, GURU VASISHTH, MINISTERS AND SOLDIERS. WHEN RAM SAW THEM, HE GREETED EACH ONE WITH WARM AFFECTION.
THIS WAS NOT A TOUGH TASK FOR RAM. DOESN'T THE SUN REFLECT ITS FORM IN HUNDREDS OF WATER POTS AT THE SAME TIME ?
RAM SAW THAT THE THREE QUEENS WERE STRICKEN WITH GRIEF LIKE TENDER CREEPERS SMITTEN WITH FROST.
KAIKEYI MUST BE FULL OF REMORSE AND GUILT! I MUST GREET HER FIRST.
MOTHERS! DON'T GRIEVE SO! NO ONE IS TO BE BLAMED. IT'S ALL THE WILL OF GOD THAT I AM IN THE FOREST.
THE SOLDIERS AND CITIZENS SETTLED DOWN TO CAMP BY THE BANKS OF THE RIVER. GURU VASISHTH WAITED FOR A WHILE, AND GAVE A LITTLE DISCOURSE ON THE ILLUSORY NATURE OF THE WORLD, BEFORE HE BROKE THE SAD NEWS TO RAM.
YOUR FATHER, KING DASHARATH, HAS GONE TO HIS HEAVENLY ABODE!
OH NO! IT WAS HIS EXCESSIVE LOVE FOR ME THAT KILLED HIM.
RAM'S SORROW MADE EVERYONE FEEL FORLORN. GURU VASISHTH GENTLY REMINDED RAM ABOUT THE LAST RITES FOR HIS FATHER.
YOU MUST BATHE IN THE RIVER MANDAKINI AND OBSERVE A STRICT NIRJALA FAST, WHERE YOU MUST NOT EVEN DRINK A DROP OF WATER THE WHOLE DAY.
WE TOO WILL OBSERVE A NIRJALA FAST.
NEXT MORNING, RAM PERFORMED ALL THE FUNERARY RITES, PRESCRIBED IN THE HOLY VEDAS.
TWO DAYS LATER, RAM REQUESTED THE PEOPLE TO RETURN TO AYODHYA.
HOW LONG CAN YOU STAY ON A MEAGRE MEAL OF ROOTS AND BULBS? I CAN'T BEAR TO SEE ALL OF YOU SUFFER SO!?
YOU ARE SO CONSIDERATE, RAM. BELIEVE ME, THEY ARE HAPPY TO BE HERE!
THE FOREST DWELLER CLANS OF KOLS, KIRATS AND BHILS BROUGHT DAINTILY SEWN LEAF PLATES FILLED WITH HONEY, ROOTS, BERRIES AND HERBS.


THE CITY FOLK WERE AMAZED TO SEE THE EXOTIC FRUITS AND HERBS.
OH! LOOK HOW LOVELY THE LEAF BOWLS ARE! SO BEAUTIFUL.
AND SUCH LUSCIOUS FRUITS!
THE HONEY IS THE MOST DELICIOUS I'VE EVER TASTED! WE MUST PAY THEM WELL FOR THESE THINGS.
BUT THE FOREST-DWELLERS REFUSED TO ACCEPT ANY MONEY, INSISTING THAT THE FOOD WAS JUST A SYMBOLIC GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP.
MEANWHILE, BHARAT WAS RESTLESS AND WORRIED. HE COULD NOT SLEEP AT NIGHT OR EAT BY DAY TIME.
TWO DAYS HAVE GONE BY AND WE HAVEN'T EVEN SPOKEN ABOUT OUR PURPOSE OF COMING HERE! HOW WILL WE CONVINCE RAM TO ACCEPT THE THRONE OF AYODHYA?
WE MUST TAKE A DECISION SOON.
VASISHTH GATHERED THE MINISTERS AND CITIZENS OF AYODHYA AND CALLED FOR BHARAT. HE SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT THE VIRTUES RAM WAS BLESSED WITH.
IF RAM IS CROWNED KING, IT WILL BRING HAPPINESS ALL AROUND. WE MUST PERSUADE HIM.
THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY CHARGED PURPOSEFULLY TOWARDS RAM'S MUD HUT.
MY LORD , WE REQUEST YOU TO RETURN TO AYODHYA. I HAVE BROUGHT ALL THE THINGS FOR YOUR CORONATION. WE WILL CROWN YOU KING RIGHT HERE.
BHARAT HAD BROODED OVER THIS IDEA FOR SO LONG THAT WORDS NOW TUMBLED OUT OF HIS MOUTH.
PLEASE DON'T PUT THE BURDEN OF KINGSHIP ON ME. LET ME REMAIN IN THE FOREST INSTEAD OF YOU.
BUT RAM REMAINED SILENT.
EVEN AS THE PEOPLE TRIED TO GUESS THE REASON OF RAM'S SILENCE, MESSENGERS FROM KING JANAK'S COURT ARRIVED THERE.
IS ALL WELL AT JANAKPURI ?
YES, HOWEVER, WE ARE SAD TO HEAR OF KING DASHARATH'S DEMISE. OUR KING JANAK WAS UPSET TO HEAR THE NEWS THAT BHARAT WAS TO BECOME KING AND RAM BANISHED TO THE FOREST.


HE SENT SPIES TO AYODHYA TO CHECK BHARAT'S INTENTIONS. WHEN HE LEARNT ABOUT BHARAT'S NOBLE DECISION, HE DECIDED TO COME HERE TOO. HE IS ON HIS WAY TO MEET YOU.
GO AT ONCE AND ESCORT HIM HERE. LET SOME BRAVE KIRATA HUNTERS GO WITH YOU.
AS SOON AS JANAK SAW THE PEOPLE OF AYODHYA, HE DISMOUNTED FROM HIS CHARIOT.
WHILE JANAK PAID HIS RESPECTS TO GURU VASISHTH, RAM AND LAKSHMAN BOWED TO THE SEERS FROM MITHILA.
SORROWFUL SPEECHES AND SAD SIGHS DROWNED THE ASSEMBLY IN A SEA OF GRIEF, AT THE LOSS OF KING DASHARATH .
DON'T LOSE HEART, O KING.
NO ONE HAS EATEN OR DRUNK A DROP OF WATER ALL DAY YESTERDAY.
SAGE VASISHTH URGED THE PEOPLE TO BREAK THEIR FAST. THE LUSH, GREEN FOREST WITH MYRIAD TREES, HELPED THEM TO RECOVER FROM THEIR GRIEF.
QUEEN SUNAYANA WAS SAD TO SEE HER DAUGHTER SITA'S LIFE IN THE FOREST.
THIS IS SO UNFAIR! IT IS AS IF THE GODS ARE USING THUNDER BOLT AS A CHISEL TO BREAK THE FROTH OF MILK.
YES, INDEED SOMETIMES THE WAY OF GODS SEEM AS SILLY AS A CHILD'S PLAY.
THE WOMEN SHARED THEIR CONCERNS WITH EACH OTHER. KAUSALYA AND SUNAYANA WERE WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE.
I AM WORRIED ABOUT BHARAT. HE IS SO DEVOTED TO RAM CAN YOU TRY TO CONVINCE YOUR HUSBAND TO ASK LAKSHMAN TO GO BACK TO AYODHYA AND LET BHARAT BE WITH RAM?
IT IS QUITE LATE NOW! I MUST GO!
SUNAYANA DID ANSWER FOR HER HUSBAND YET SHE COULD NOT LEAVE WITHOUT ASSURING THE QUEENS OF AYODHYA.
RAM WILL CERTAINLY RULE OVER AYODHYA. IT HAS BEEN PREDICTED BY THE SAGES.
WITH THE PERMISSION OF KAUSALYA, SUNAYANA TOOK SITA WITH HER TO THEIR CAMP IN THE FOREST.



* A MEASURE OF WEIGHT


THE PARTING OF BHARAT AND RAM WAS AS EMOTIONALLY CHARGED AS THEIR MEETING.
WHAT CAN I GIVE HIM AS A MEMENTO?
HERE, TAKE MY WOODEN SANDALS.
BHARAT RECEIVED THE SANDALS GRATEFULLY AND PLACED THEM ON HIS HEAD.
OH! WITH THIS KEEPSAKE WITH ME, I WILL FEEL AS IF RAM IS NEAR ME!
AFTER BIDDING FAREWELL TO HIS BROTHERS AND SETTLING THE QUEENS IN THEIR PALANQUINS, RAM SENT OFF JANAK'S PARTY.
HORSES, BULLOCKS, ELEPHANTS, CARRIAGES, PALANQUINS TRUDGED OUT OF THE FOREST BEARING THE RETINUE OF BHARAT AND JANAK.
IT'S SO STRANGE. JUST THREE OF US AGAIN!
IT WILL TAKE THEM FOUR DAYS TO REACH AYODHYA.
KING JANAK STAYED IN AYODHYA FOR A FEW DAYS AND SETTLED THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE.
I THINK, BHARAT, WITH THE HELP OF GURU VASISHTH, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MANAGE WELL.
I WILL TRY. SHATRUGHN, I WANT YOU TO TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELFARE OF THE QUEENS.
GURU VASISHTH CHOSE AN AUSPICIOUS TIME AND DATE FOR THE CORONATION.
LET THE SANDALS OF MY BROTHER REPRESENT HIS REIGN OVER THE KINGDOM OF AYODHYA.
BHARAT CAST OFF HIS ROYAL ROBES AND JEWELS AND DECIDED TO LIVE LIKE A HERMIT.
HE MADE A SIMPLE HUT OF LEAVES AND TWIGS IN NANDIGRAM AND WORE CLOTHES OF BARK.
HE GATHERED HIS HAIR IN A MATTED KNOT AND SLEPT ON A BED OF KUSHA GRASS.
HIS SPARTAN LIFESTYLE MADE HIM LEAN YET HIS FACE RADIATED SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

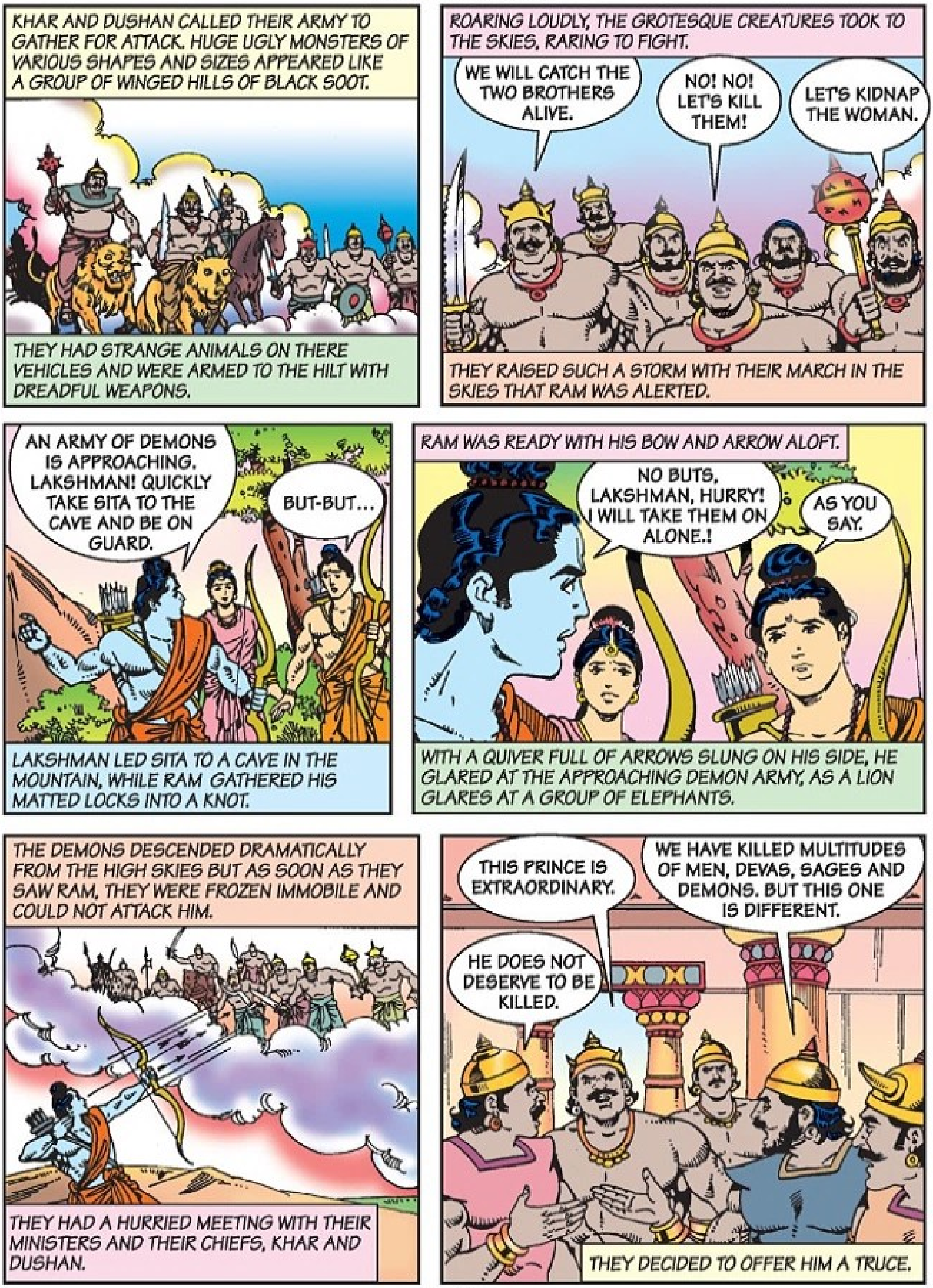

HE LOOKED AFTER THE AFFAIRS OF THE STATE, AS HE HAD PROMISED. BUT HE CONSIDERED RAM TO BE THE TRUE KING AND SOUGHT HIS BLESSINGS FOR EVERY DECISION HE MADE.
RAM, LAKSHMAN AND SITA LIVE A TOUGH LIFE. BUT BHARAT'S LIFE IS TOUGHER, LIVING LIKE AN ASCETIC THOUGH HE IS A KING.
MEANWHILE RAM, SITA AND LAKSHMAN HAD SETTLED DOWN TO THEIR SIMPLE ROUTINE IN THE IDYLLIC FOREST HOME.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH ALL THESE FLOWERS?
WAIT! I'M MAKING SOME ORNAMENTS FOR YOU!
RAM BEDECKED SITA IN THE FLORAL ORNAMENTS HE LOVINGLY MADE FOR HER.
HOW LOVELY SHE LOOKED SEATED ON THE CRYSTAL ROCK, HER NATURAL BEAUTY ENHANCED BY THE LOVELY FLORAL JEWELLERY!
SUDDENLY A CROW BIT SITA ON HER FOOT. THE FOOLISH SON OF INDRA, IN THE DISGUISE OF A CROW WANTED TO TEST THE MIGHT OF RAM.
WHEN RAM SAW THE BLEEDING WOUND HE WAS ENRAGED AND TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROW. WHICH MADE THE CROW FLY OFF IN TERROR.
THE CROW PLEADED FOR MERCY AND RAM LET HIM GO WITH THE LOSS OF ONE EYE.
I THINK WE SHOULD MOVE FROM CHITRAKOOT. TOO MANY PEOPLE KNOW THAT WE LIVE HERE.
AS YOU SAY!
THE THREE OF THEM WENT TO SAGE ATRI'S ASHRAM WHERE THEY RECEIVED A WARM WELCOME. SAGE ATRI'S WIFE ANASUYA GAVE SITA A WONDERFUL PRESENT.
THESE ARE DIVINE CLOTHES AND JEWELS THAT WILL REMAIN FRESH AND NEW FOR EVER, THROUGHOUT YOUR LONG STAY IN JUNGLE.
OH! THEY ARE WONDERFUL!
ANASUYA ALSO GAVE SITA A LOT OF ADVICE ON THE DUTIES OF A WIFE.


DEAR SITA, YOUR FATHER MOTHER AND BROTHER MAY BE HELPFUL TO A DEGREE BUT A HUSBAND IS AN UNLIMITED BLESSING. FORTITUDE PIETY, A FRIEND AND A WIFE - THESE FOUR ARE TESTED ONLY IN ADVERSITY.
HMM!
ANASUYA THEN GAVE SITA THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ABOUT THE GUIDING RULES FOR A WIFE.
THERE ARE FOUR GRADES OF WIVES. THE HIGHEST ARE THOSE WHO ARE CONVINCED IN THEIR HEART THAT NO OTHER MAN EXISTS IN THE WORLD. THE SECOND IN ORDER REGARD ALL OTHER MEN AS A FATHER, BROTHER OR SON. THE THIRD RESTRAINS HER BEHAVIOUR BY THE THOUGHT OF FAMILY HONOUR. THE FOURTH IS RESTRAINED BY FEAR AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY.
ANASUYA THEN EXPLAINED THAT SHE GAVE THE DISCOURSE FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD.
RAM, SITA AND LAKSHMAN BID FAREWELL TO SAGE ATRI AND ANASUYA AND MADE THEIR WAY TO THE HERMITAGE OF SHARABHANGA.
OH GRACIOUS RAGHUVIR! I HAVE BEEN WAITING JUST FOR YOU! I WANTED TO SEE YOU BEFORE I DISCARD THIS BODY.
SAGE SHARABHANGA BUILT A FUNERAL PYRE AND SAT UPON IT AND AS HE HAD PLANNED, LEFT FOR THE HEAVENLY ABODE.
WHEN THE THREE OF THEM RESUMED THE JOURNEY, THEY MET A STRANGE SIGHT.
WHY ARE THERE SO MANY SKELETONS AND BONES STREWN HERE?
THESE ARE THE BONES OF SAGES WHO HAVE BEEN DEVOURED BY DEMONS.
RAM'S EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. WITH HIS BOW ALOFT HE MADE A SOLEMN VOW.
I SWEAR I SHALL RID THE EARTH OF DEMONS!
RAM VISITED THE HERMITAGE OF SEVERAL SAGES. AMONG THEM WAS A DISCIPLE OF SAGE AGASTYA, CALLED SUTIKSHN.
WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS OF RAM'S ARRIVAL, HE WAS BESIDES HIMSELF WITH JOY.
RAM IS COMING HERE? OH! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
HE WAS SO OVERWHELMED THAT HE RAN HITHER AND THITHER AND BEGAN TO DANCE AND SING. RAM SAW HIS ANTICS FROM A DISTANCE.

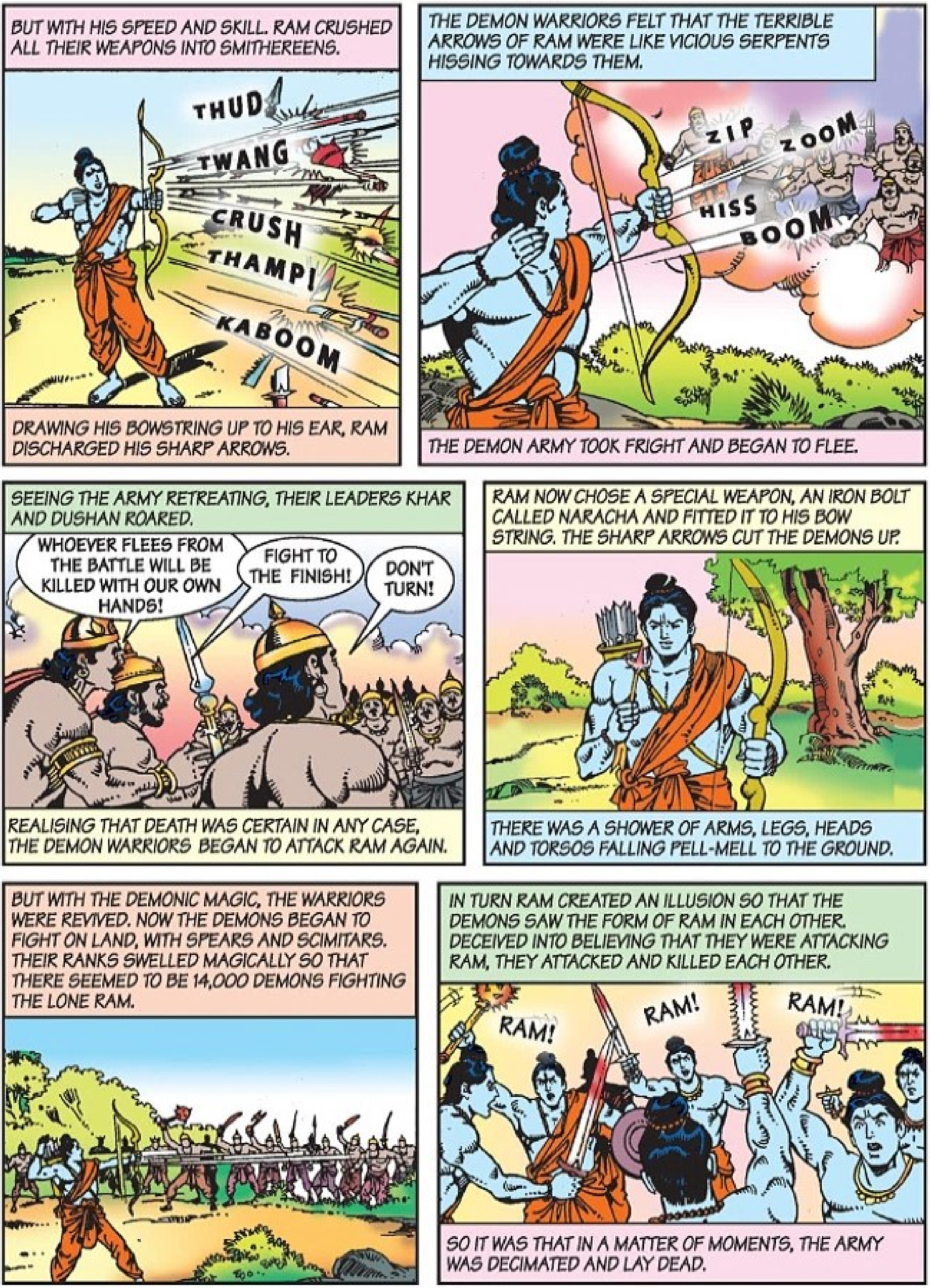

WHEN AT LAST HE BEHELD RAM, SUTIKSHN SAT STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST PATH. HIS BODY BRISTLED LIKE A JACKFRUIT WITH EVERY HAIR ON END.
RAM ROUSED HIM FROM HIS STUPOUR AND EMBRACED HIM. TOGETHER THEY SET OUT TO MEET THE LEARNED SAGE AGASTYA.
RAM HAD A PURPOSE FOR MEETING AGATSYA.
PLEASE GUIDE ME. TELL ME THE WAY TO SLAY THE DEMONS, THE FOES OF HERMITS.
THERE IS A CHARMING HOLY SPOT CALLED PANCHAVATI IN THE DANDAK FOREST.
SO IT WAS, THAT RAM SET UP HIS HUMBLE HUT BY THE BANKS OF THE GODAVARI, IN PANCHAVATI.
IT WAS A TRANQUIL LIFE OF SIMPLE JOYS AND WARM COMPANIONSHIP, LAKSHMAN OFTEN SAT BESIDE RAM AND SHARED HIS INNERMOST THOUGHTS.
TELL ME THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL.
IT IS THE SENSE OF I AND YOU THAT HOLDS SWAY OVER INDIVIDUAL SOULS.
RAM LOVINGLY DESCRIBED THE PATH OF DEVOTION AND SPIRUTUAL WISDOM.
IT WAS HERE THAT RAM MET JATAYU, THE KING OF VULTURES AND BUILT A BOND OF FRIENDSHIP WITH HIM.
IT SEEMED THAT THE MERE PRESENCE OF RAM MADE THE PLACE BLOOM, THE HILLS AND WOODS LOVELIER AND LUSH DAY-BY-DAY AND BIRDS CHIRPED CHEERFULLY.
ONE DAY THE PEACEFUL CALM OF PANCHAVATI WAS SHATTERED BY SHOORPANAKHA THE SISTER OF RAVAN, THE DEMON KING OF LANKA.
OH! SUCH HANDSOME MEN! I MUST TRY TO ATTRACT THEM!
SHOORPANAKHA HAD NAILS AS LARGE AS WINNOWING FANS AND A HIDEOUS FORM TO MATCH.


SHE KNEW HOW HORRIBLE SHE LOOKED.
HMM! MY DEADLY DEMON LOOKS WILL SCARE THE WITS OUT OF THEM. I MUST TRANSFORM MYSELF INTO A LOVELY LASS.'
IN AN INSTANT, SHE MADE HERSELF CHANGE INTO A LOVELY, DELICATE LADY.
SIMPERING SHYLY, SHE SIDLED UPTO RAM AND SPOKE IN THE SWEETEST TONE EVER.
THERE IS NO MAN LIKE YOU AND NO WOMAN LIKE ME: GOD HAS PLANNED OUR MATCH WITH A LOT OF THOUGHT, DON'T YOU THINK SO?
HUH ?
I HAVE SEARCHED THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD, BUT I HAVEN'T FOUND A MAN GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME. I THOUGHT I WOULD REMAIN A MAIDEN BUT NOW MEETING YOU HAS SET MY MIND AT REST! YOU ARE MY MAN!
RAM SUPPRESSED A SMILE AND SIGNALLED AT SITA TO INDICATE THAT HE WAS MARRIED.
GRRR
BUT MY BROTHER IS FREE AND UNATTACHED!
SHOORPANAKHA NOW APPROACHED LAKSHMAN, OOZING AS MUCH CHARM AS SHE COULD MANAGE.
ME? OH NO! I AM LIKE HIS SERVANT! HE IS MY LORD AND MASTER. HE IS THE RULER OF AYODHYA, FREE TO DO WHATEVER HE WILLS.
LAKSHMAN PICKED UP RAM'S PLAYFUL MOOD AND TEASED SHOORPANAKHA.
WITH A VERY SERIOUS EXPRESSION, LAKSHMAN GAVE A HUMBLE SPEECH.
HOW CAN A SERVANT ASPIRE FOR HAPPINESS? OR A BEGGAR EXPECT HONOUR OR ...
STOP IT! ENOUGH!
SHOORPANAKHA WAS IN NO MOOD FOR A DISCOURSE AND TURNED BACK TO RAM.


RAM SENT HER BACK TO LAKSHMAN, WHO DECIDED TO BE FRANK WITH HER.
THE ONLY MAN WHO WILL BE A MATCH FOR YOU IS THE ONE WHO HAS FLUNG ALL SHAME TO THE WINDS!
SHOORPANAKHA DID NOT LIKE BEING TOSSED ABOUT AND INSULTED IN THIS MANNER.
SHE TURNED TO RAM IN FURY AND SHOWED HER ORIGINAL HIDEOUS FORM.
AHHH
EEEEE
SITA WAS PETRIFIED TO SEE THE HORRIBLE DEMONESS.
RAM SAW HOW AGITATED SITA WAS AND SIGNALLED TO LAKSHMAN. AT ONCE, LAKSHMAN DREW HIS SWORD....
...AND IN SWIFT STROKES, CUT OFF SHOORPANAKHA'S NOSE AND EARS.
LOOKING MORE FRIGHTFUL THAN BEFORE, SHOORPANAKHA RAN OFF HOWLING LOUDLY.
BOO HOO
IT LOOKED AS IF SCARLET STREAMS WERE FLOWING DOWN A BLACK MOUNTAIN.
SOBBING LOUDLY, SHE WENT TO HER DEMON BROTHERS, KHAR AND DUSHAN.
O BROTHERS! THIS IS A CURSE ON YOUR MANHOOD AND MIGHT .
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
WHO DID THIS TO YOU?
SHOORPANAKHA TOLD THEM IN DETAIL, HER VERSION OF THE INCIDENT.
I WAS JUST INTRODUCING MYSELF INNOCENTLY TO THE TWO MEN...AND FOR NO RHYME OR REASON HE CUT OFF MY NOSE AND EARS!
WE WILL SHOW HIM WHO YOU ARE!
LET'S GATHER OUR FORCES.


KHAR AND DUSHAN CALLED THEIR ARMY TO GATHER FOR ATTACK. HUGE UGLY MONSTERS OF VARIOUS SHAPES AND SIZES APPEARED LIKE A GROUP OF WINGED HILLS OF BLACK SOOT.
THEY HAD STRANGE ANIMALS ON THERE VEHICLES AND WERE ARMED TO THE HILT WITH DREADFUL WEAPONS.
ROARING LOUDLY, THE GROTESQUE CREATURES TOOK TO THE SKIES, RARING TO FIGHT.
WE WILL CATCH THE TWO BROTHERS ALIVE.
NO! NO! LET'S KILL THEM!
LET'S KIDNAP THE WOMAN.
THEY RAISED SUCH A STORM WITH THEIR MARCH IN THE SKIES THAT RAM WAS ALERTED.
AN ARMY OF DEMONS IS APPROACHING. LAKSHMAN! QUICKLY TAKE SITA TO THE CAVE AND BE ON GUARD.
BUT-BUT...
LAKSHMAN LED SITA TO A CAVE IN THE MOUNTAIN, WHILE RAM GATHERED HIS MATTED LOCKS INTO A KNOT.
RAM WAS READY WITH HIS BOW AND ARROW ALOFT.
NO BUTS, LAKSHMAN, HURRY! I WILL TAKE THEM ON ALONE.!
AS YOU SAY.
WITH A QUIVER FULL OF ARROWS SLUNG ON HIS SIDE, HE GLARED AT THE APPROACHING DEMON ARMY, AS A LION GLARES AT A GROUP OF ELEPHANTS.
THE DEMONS DESCENDED DRAMATICALLY FROM THE HIGH SKIES BUT AS SOON AS THEY SAW RAM, THEY WERE FROZEN IMMOBILE AND COULD NOT ATTACK HIM.
THEY HAD A HURRIED MEETING WITH THEIR MINISTERS AND THEIR CHIEFS, KHAR AND DUSHAN.
THIS PRINCE IS EXTRAORDINARY.
WE HAVE KILLED MULTITUDES OF MEN, DEVAS, SAGES AND DEMONS. BUT THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT.
HE DOES NOT DESERVE TO BE KILLED.
THEY DECIDED TO OFFER HIM A TRUCE.

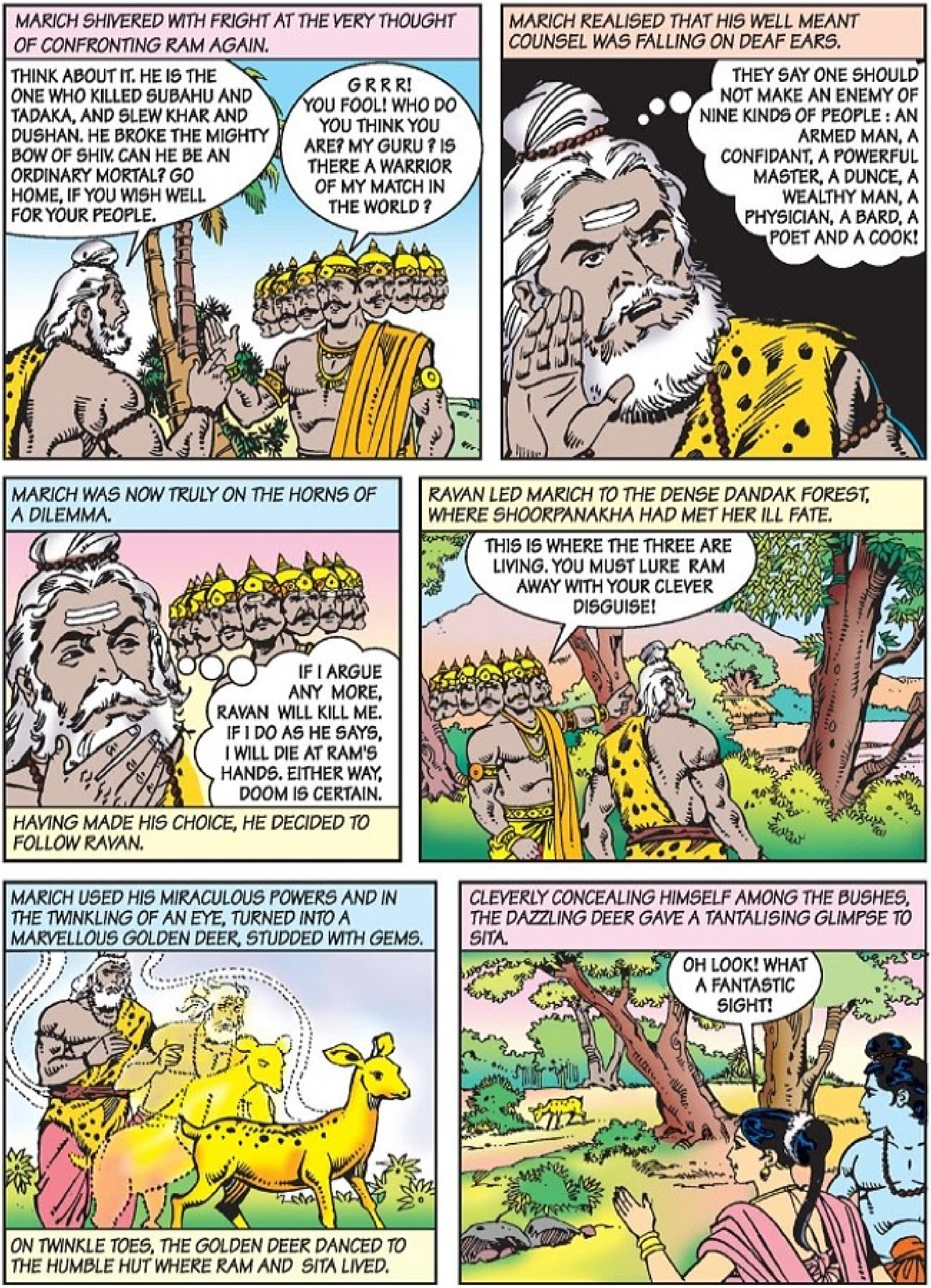

SURRENDER TO US AT ONCE! GIVE US THE WOMAN YOU HAVE HIDDEN AND YOU TWO BROTHERS CAN GO HOME UNHURT.
RAM WAS AMUSED AT THIS OFFER OF PEACE.
WE BELONG TO THE WARRIOR RACE OF KSHATRIYS! NO MIGHTY FOE CAN PUT FEAR IN OUR HEARTS! WHY, YOU ARE LIKE THE PREY WE HUNT AND KILL ALL THE TIME!
EVEN DEATH ITSELF, DOESN'T PUT FEAR IN US! IF YOU ARE SCARED TO FIGHT US, RUN OFF! I WILL NEVER ATTACK AN ENEMY WHO HAS HIS BACK TURNED.
IN A BATTLEFIELD, TRICKS AND PRANKS, PITY OR COMPASSION IS A SIGN OF COWARDICE! GO AND TELL THIS TO YOUR MASTERS.
RAM'S WORDS STUNG KHAR AND DUSHAN TO THE CORE. THEY ORDERED THEIR ARMY TO ATTACK.
WITH BOWS AND ARROWS, STEEL CLUBS AND AXES, SPEARS AND PIKES, SCIMITARS AND MACES, THE FIERCE DEMONS TOOK TO THE SKIES.
SEIZE HIM!
KILL HIM!
SLAY HIM!
BUT JUST THE TWANG OF RAM'S BOW WAS ENOUGH TO PUT FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS.
THE TERRIFIC, SHRILL FRIGHTENING SOUND DEAFENED THEIR EARS AND AGITATED THEIR MINDS SO MUCH THAT THEY LOST THEIR SENSES FOR A WHILE.
TWANG
WHEN THEY RECOVERED, THEY BEGAN TO RAIN THEIR WEAPONS ON THEIR SOLE OPPONENT ON THE GROUND.


BUT WITH HIS SPEED AND SKILL. RAM CRUSHED ALL THEIR WEAPONS INTO SMITHEREENS.
THUD
TWANG
CRUSH
THAMPI
KABOOM
DRAWING HIS BOWSTRING UP TO HIS EAR, RAM DISCHARGED HIS SHARP ARROWS.
THE DEMON WARRIORS FELT THAT THE TERRIBLE ARROWS OF RAM WERE LIKE VICIOUS SERPENTS HISSING TOWARDS THEM.
ZIP
ZOOM
HISS
BOOM
THE DEMON ARMY TOOK FRIGHT AND BEGAN TO FLEE.
SEEING THE ARMY RETREATING, THEIR LEADERS KHAR AND DUSHAN ROARED.
WHOEVER FLEES FROM THE BATTLE WILL BE KILLED WITH OUR OWN HANDS!
FIGHT TO THE FINISH!
DON'T TURN!
REALISING THAT DEATH WAS CERTAIN IN ANY CASE, THE DEMON WARRIORS BEGAN TO ATTACK RAM AGAIN.
RAM NOW CHOSE A SPECIAL WEAPON, AN IRON BOLT CALLED NARACHA AND FITTED IT TO HIS BOW STRING. THE SHARP ARROWS CUT THE DEMONS UP.
THERE WAS A SHOWER OF ARMS, LEGS, HEADS AND TORSOS FALLING PELL-MELL TO THE GROUND.
BUT WITH THE DEMONIC MAGIC, THE WARRIORS WERE REVIVED. NOW THE DEMONS BEGAN TO FIGHT ON LAND, WITH SPEARS AND SCIMITARS. THEIR RANKS SWELLED MAGICALLY SO THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE 14,000 DEMONS FIGHTING THE LONE RAM.
IN TURN RAM CREATED AN ILLUSION SO THAT THE DEMONS SAW THE FORM OF RAM IN EACH OTHER. DECEIVED INTO BELIEVING THAT THEY WERE ATTACKING RAM, THEY ATTACKED AND KILLED EACH OTHER.
RAM!
RAM!
RAM!
SO IT WAS THAT IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE ARMY WAS DECIMATED AND LAY DEAD.


LAKSHMAN BROUGHT SITA BACK AND SHE GAZED AT THE DARK HUED RAM WITH UTMOST AFFECTION, RELIEVED TO SEE HIM UNHURT AFTER THE ORDEAL.
PEACE REIGNED AT PANCHAVATI AND THEY RESUMED THEIR SIMPLE LIFE OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION.
WHEN SHE REALISED THAT KHAR AND DUSHAN WERE KILLED, SHOORPANAKHA DECIDED TO GO TO HER BROTHER RAVAN, THE KING OF LANKA.
ALL YOU DO IS DRINK AND SLEEP ALL DAY! YOU HAVE NO IDEA THAT YOUR ENEMY IS AT THE DOOR.
RAVAN COULD NOT FATHOM THE REASON FOR HER RAGE.
YOU SHOULD NEVER TREAT AN ENEMY, A DISEASE, FIRE OR SERPENT WITH SCORN, SO I HAVE HEARD.
AS SHE APPROACHED CLOSER TO THE THRONE RAVAN AND THE COURTIERS NOTICED THAT SHE WAS WOUNDED AND BLEEDING.
OH! YOU TEN–HEADED ONE! SHOULD I, YOUR SISTER, BE TREATED LIKE THIS WHILE YOU ARE ALIVE ?
SHE FLUNG HERSELF DOWN WHILE SOBBING LOUDLY.
HER LAMENTATION AND LOOKS ROUSED THE ENTIRE COURT TO SYMPATHY AND ANGER. THEY HELPED HER TO GET UP AND CONSOLED HER.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU ?
WHO DARED TO CUT YOUR NOSE AND EARS?
SHOORPANAKHA KNEW SHE COULD PERSUADE RAVAN TO ATTACK RAM.
THE SONS OF DASHARATH, THE KING OF AYODHYA, ARE ROAMING IN THE FOREST. THEY LOOK LIKE YOUNG BOYS BUT HAVE IMMENSE STRENGTH.


IN FACT, THEY HAVE PROMISED THE SAGES THAT THEY WILL KILL ALL DEMONS. THE HANDSOME YOUTH IS CALLED RAM AND WITH HIM IS A LISSOM LASS.
OH! WHAT A DIVINE BEAUTY SHE IS! THE GODS HAVE CREATED HER WITH THE UTMOST ATTENTION TO PERFECTION. HIS YOUNGER BROTHER CUT OFF MY NOSE AND EARS. WHEN I SAID I WAS YOUR SISTER, THEY JUST LAUGHED AT ME.
WHY DID YOU NOT CALL FOR HELP?
I DID! KHAR AND DUSHAN CAME WITH THEIR ARMIES TO HELP ME BUT RAM KILLED THEM ALL.
RAVAN HAD BEEN LISTENING TO HER LAMENT ABSENT-MINDEDLY SO FAR BUT NOW HE WAS ALERT.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? THEY ARE ALL DEAD!
YES, KHAR, DUSHAN, TRISHIRA AND THEIR DEMON SOLDIERS WERE ALL KILLED BY RAM.
RAVAN CONSOLED SHOORPANAKHA AND ASSURED HER AS MUCH AS HE COULD BY BOASTING ABOUT HIS STRENGTH AND MIGHT.
BUT WHEN HE RETIRED TO HIS PALACE, HE SPENT A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.
ANXIOUSLY HE PACED ABOUT IN HIS MARVELLOUS CHAMBER, TRYING TO PLAN HIS NEXT MOVE.
KHAR AND DUSHAN WERE AS STRONG AS ME! HOW COULD THEY BE KILLED?
RAVAN DECIDED THAT THERE WAS NO TIME FOR THOUGHT. HE HAD TO ACT AT ONCE.

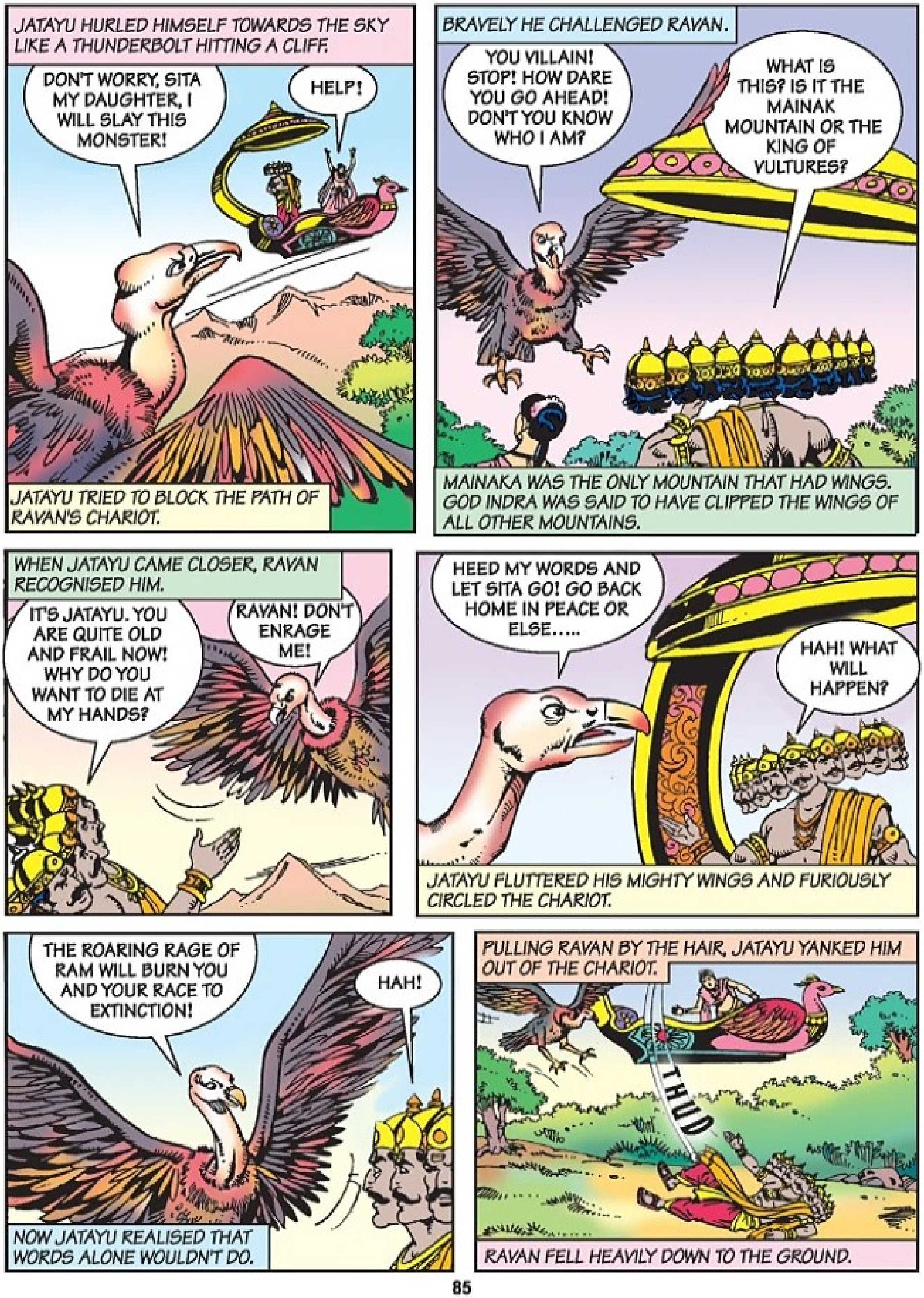

ALONE, HE MOUNTED HIS CHARIOT AND DROVE TO THE SEASHORE WHERE MARICH LIVED.
MEANWHILE, DEEP IN THE FOREST, RAM AND SITA SAT IN THEIR SIMPLE HUT WHILE LAKSHMAN WENT TO COLLECT ROOTS, FRUITS AND BULBS.
DEAR ONE! I AM ABOUT TO ENACT SOME WONDROUS DEEDS TO DESTROY THE DEMONS. TILL I FINISH MY TASK, LET THE FIRE BE YOUR DWELLING PLACE.
THE REAL SITA ENTERED THE SAFE SANCTUM OF THE FIRE, LEAVING BEHIND AN EXACT REPLICA IN THE HUT. NO ONE KNEW OF THIS EXCEPT RAM AND SITA.
RAVAN'S VISIT SURPRISED MARICH.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE ALONE, AT THIS HOUR? WHY ARE YOU SO AGITATED AND WORRIED?
HE THEN UNFOLDED HIS PLAN TO MARICH.
YOU ARE CAPABLE OF CHANGING YOUR FORM AT WILL, MARICHA.YOU MUST DISGUISE YOURSELF AS A DECEPTIVE DEER, SO THAT I CAN DECEIVE THE PRINCES OF AYODHYA AND CARRY OFF THE PRINCESS.
NO, NO!
LISTEN, O TEN-HEADED ONE! THOUGH HE MAY LOOK LIKE AN ORDINARY MAN, RAM IS NOT THE PERSON YOU SHOULD ANTAGONISE.
MARICH RECALLED HIS EARLIER ENCOUNTER WITH RAM.
LONG AGO HE HAD COME TO SAGE VISHWAMITR'S HERMITAGE. WITH JUST ONE ARROW HE HIT ME SO HARD THAT I WAS HURLED A HUNDRED YOJANAS AWAY. NO SIR! NO GOOD WILL COME OUT OF MAKING AN ENEMY OF RAM.

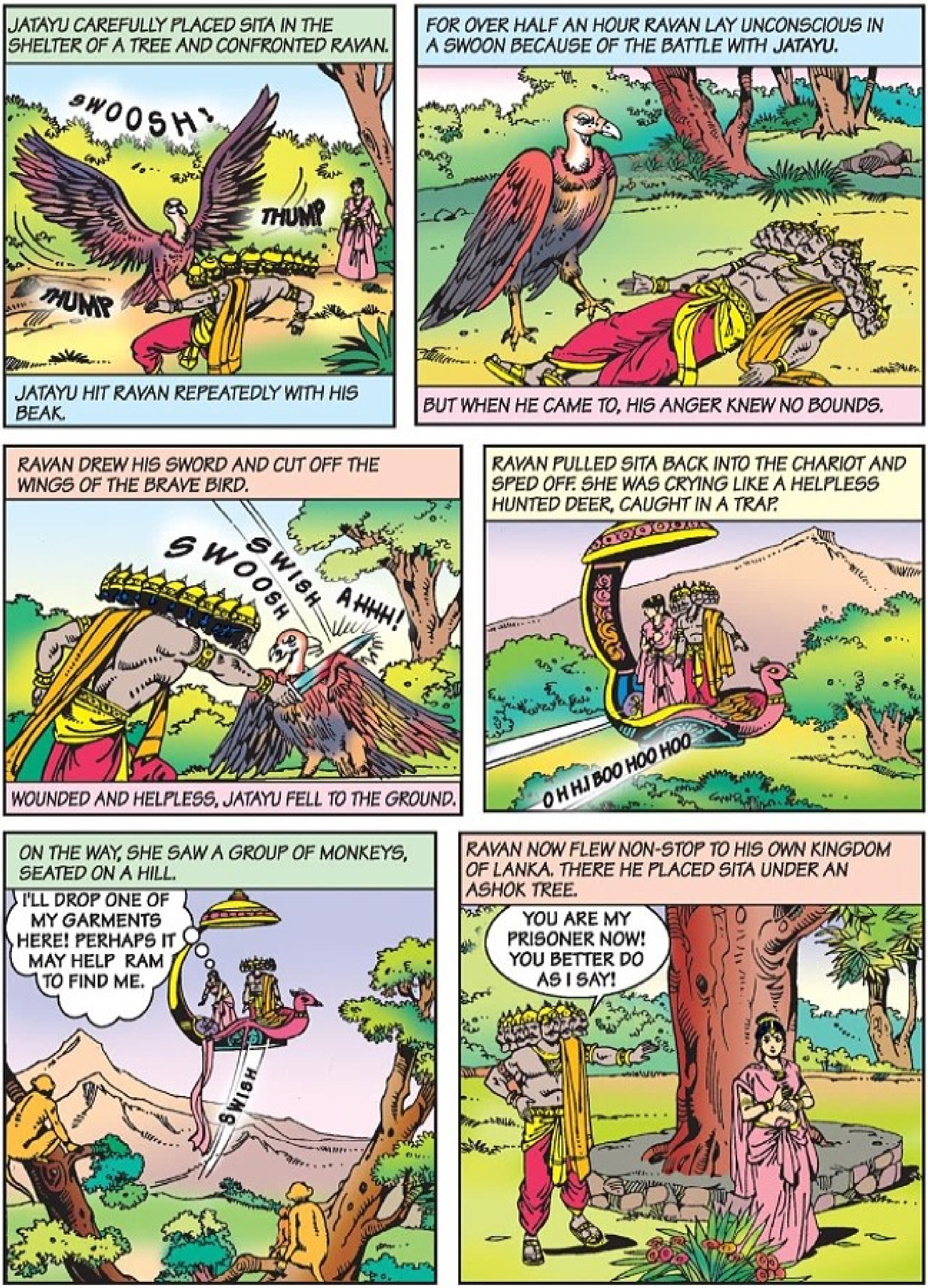

MARICH SHIVERED WITH FRIGHT AT THE VERY THOUGHT OF CONFRONTING RAM AGAIN.
THINK ABOUT IT. HE IS THE ONE WHO KILLED SUBAHU AND TADAKA, AND SLEW KHAR AND DUSHAN. HE BROKE THE MIGHTY BOW OF SHIV. CAN HE BE AN ORDINARY MORTAL? GO HOME, IF YOU WISH WELL FOR YOUR PEOPLE.
G R R R! YOU FOOL! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? MY GURU ? IS THERE A WARRIOR OF MY MATCH IN THE WORLD ?
MARICH REALISED THAT HIS WELL MEANT COUNSEL WAS FALLING ON DEAF EARS.
THEY SAY ONE SHOULD NOT MAKE AN ENEMY OF NINE KINDS OF PEOPLE : AN ARMED MAN, A CONFIDANT, A POWERFUL MASTER, A DUNCE, A WEALTHY MAN, A PHYSICIAN, A BARD, A POET AND A COOK!
MARICH WAS NOW TRULY ON THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA.
IF I ARGUE ANY MORE, RAVAN WILL KILL ME. IF I DO AS HE SAYS, I WILL DIE AT RAM'S HANDS. EITHER WAY, DOOM IS CERTAIN.
HAVING MADE HIS CHOICE, HE DECIDED TO FOLLOW RAVAN.
RAVAN LED MARICH TO THE DENSE DANDAK FOREST, WHERE SHOORPANAKHA HAD MET HER ILL FATE.
THIS IS WHERE THE THREE ARE LIVING. YOU MUST LURE RAM AWAY WITH YOUR CLEVER DISGUISE!
MARICH USED HIS MIRACULOUS POWERS AND IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, TURNED INTO A MARVELLOUS GOLDEN DEER, STUDDED WITH GEMS.
ON TWINKLE TOES, THE GOLDEN DEER DANCED TO THE HUMBLE HUT WHERE RAM AND SITA LIVED.
CLEVERLY CONCEALING HIMSELF AMONG THE BUSHES, THE DAZZLING DEER GAVE A TANTALISING GLIMPSE TO SITA.
OH LOOK! WHAT A FANTASTIC SIGHT!


SITA WAS CAPTIVATED BY THE SIGHT OF THE DEER AND COAXED RAM TO GO AFTER IT.
PLEASE, PLEASE GET THE SKIN OF THAT DEER FOR ME, MY LORD!
RAM TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROWS AND SET OUT TO HUNT THE GOLDEN DEER.
WHILE LEAVING THE ASHRAM, HE CAUTIONED LAKSHMAN.
TAKE CARE, LAKSHMAN! THERE ARE HORDES OF DEMONS ROAMING IN THE JUNGLE. TAKE CARE OF SITA, USING YOUR STRENGTH AND YOUR JUDGEMENT.
RAM RAN AFTER THE GOLDEN DEER. BUT AS SOON AS IT SAW RAM APPROACHING, THE DEER TOOK FLIGHT WITH RAM CLOSE BEHIND.
RAM WAS READY WITH HIS BOW ALOFT BUT THE DEER WAS UP TO STRANGE TRICKS.
NOW I SEE HIM AND NOW I DON'T! HOW STRANGE!
SOMETIMES THE DEER APPEARED WITHIN REACH AND THE NEXT MOMENT, FAR AWAY IN THE DEPTH OF THE FOREST.
WITH HIS WILY WAYS, THE DECEPTIVE DAZZLING DEER LED RAM FAR AWAY FROM THE HUT. THEN AT LAST, RAM TOOK AIM AND WITH ONE ARROW, FELLED HIM.
TWANG
THUD
WITH A FEARFUL CRY, THE GOLDEN DEER COLLAPSED ON THE GROUND.
BUT EVEN AS IT FELL, IT CRIED OUT ALOUD IN RAM'S VOICE.
LAKSHMAN! LAKSHMAN!
THEN AS LIFE EBBED OUT OF HIM, HE ASSUMED HIS REAL FORM AS MARICH.


AT THE HUT, SITA HEARD RAM'S VOICE CRYING OUT FOR LAKSHMAN.
LAKSHMAN!
OH NO! HE'S CRYING OUT FOR YOU! HE'S IN TROUBLE!
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
SITA WAS SCARED AND WORRIED.
HURRY UP AND GO! YOUR BROTHER IS IN GREAT DANGER!
I KNOW RAM WELL! HE CANNOT BE IN TROUBLE!
BUT SITA WOULD NOT LISTEN TO LAKSHMAN'S CALM RESPONSE. SHE INSISTED HE SHOULD GO AT ONCE.
I KNOW WHY YOU ARE NOT GOING! YOU DON'T CARE, DO YOU?
WHY WON'T SHE LISTEN TO ME?
LAKSHMAN REALISED THAT HE WAS BEING FORCED TO GO IN SEARCH OF RAM.
OH GODS OF THE FOREST AND THE DEITIES OF THE CARDINAL DIRECTIONS, I LEAVE SITA TO YOUR CARE.
LAKSHMAN RAN IN THE DIRECTION, FROM WHICH THEY HAD HEARD THE CRIES.
AS SOON AS LAKSHMAN WAS OUT OF SIGHT AND EAR SHOT, THE WICKED RAVAN DISGUISED AS A HERMIT, APPROACHED THE HUT, GLANCING FURTIVELY LIKE A THIEF.
GIVE ME ALMS!
AT FIRST, HE TALKED LIKE A RECLUSE.
BUT SOON HE BEGAN TO TELL ALLURING STORIES TO PERSUADE SITA TO LEAVE WITH HIM. WHEN THAT DID NOT WORK, HE BEGAN TO THREATEN HER.
YOU BETTER COME WITH ME. OR ELSE....
OH YOU SAGE! YOU SPEAK LIKE A SWINDLER AND A ROGUE.
RAVAN REALISED THAT HIS DISGUISE WAS DOING HIM NO GOOD.


HE ASSURED HIS ORIGINAL TEN HEADED-DEMON FORM AND LOOMED LARGE BEFORE THE SCARED SITA.
I AM RAVAN! THE LORD OF LANKA.
JUST WAIT O WRETCH! WAIT TILL MY LORD COMES BACK!
SITA GATHERED COURAGE AT THE THOUGHT OF RAM.
YOU ARE INVITING DEATH BY PURSUING ME! IT'S LIKE A TINY HARE TRYING TO WOO A LIONESS.
GRRRR
NOW THE ENRAGED RAVAN PULLED SITA FORCIBLY, FLUNG HER INTO HIS CHARIOT AND TOOK TO THE SKIES.
IT WAS THE MAGICAL PUSHPAK VIMAN THAT COULD FLY.
RAVAN WAS SO AGITATED THAT HE COULD BARELY STEER THE VEHICLE AND SITA CRIED ALOUD RELENTLESSLY.
OH! RAM! WHERE ARE YOU! OH, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD, COME TO MY HELP!
SITA REMEMBERED HOW SHE HAD FORCED LAKSHMAN TO GO AWAY.
OH LAKSHMAN ! IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT! SERVES ME RIGHT FOR BEING SO ANGRY WITH YOU. NOW I'M FAR AWAY AND LOOK AT MY PLIGHT!
AS THE CHARIOT FLEW OVER THE SYLVAN WOODS, THE KING OF VULTURES, JATAYU SAW IT.
HELP, RAM! HELP ME, LAKSHMAN.
OH! IT IS SITA, THE WIFE OF RAM THAT THE WICKED RAVAN IS TAKING AWAY.

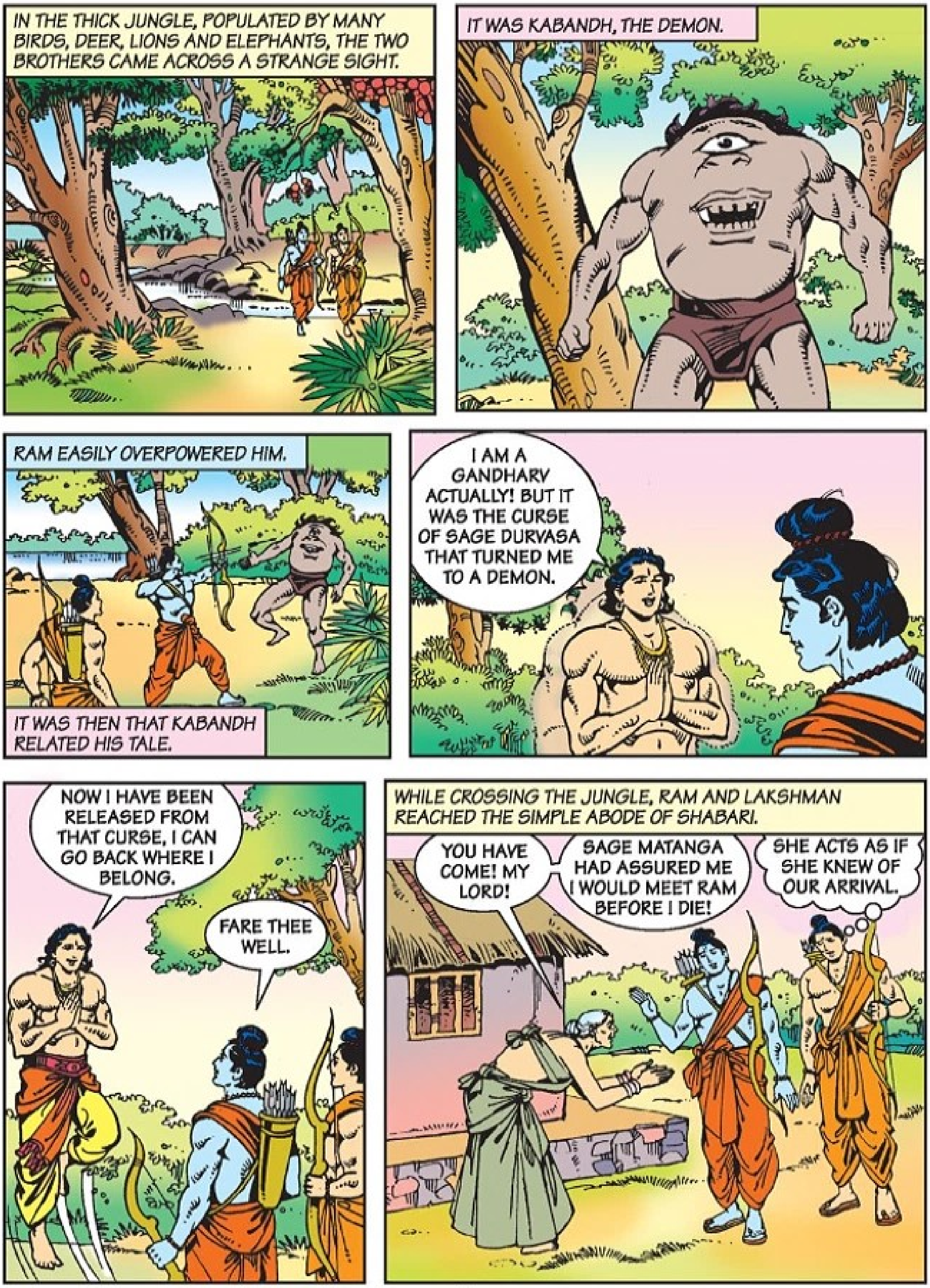

JATAYU HURLED HIMSELF TOWARDS THE SKY LIKE A THUNDERBOLT HITTING A CLIFF.
DON'T WORRY, SITA MY DAUGHTER, I WILL SLAY THIS MONSTER!
HELP!
JATAYU TRIED TO BLOCK THE PATH OF RAVAN'S CHARIOT.
BRAVELY HE CHALLENGED RAVAN.
YOU VILLAIN! STOP! HOW DARE YOU GO AHEAD! DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
WHAT IS THIS? IS IT THE MAINAK MOUNTAIN OR THE KING OF VULTURES?
MAINAKA WAS THE ONLY MOUNTAIN THAT HAD WINGS. GOD INDRA WAS SAID TO HAVE CLIPPED THE WINGS OF ALL OTHER MOUNTAINS.
WHEN JATAYU CAME CLOSER, RAVAN RECOGNISED HIM.
IT'S JATAYU. YOU ARE QUITE OLD AND FRAIL NOW! WHY DO YOU WANT TO DIE AT MY HANDS?
RAVAN! DON'T ENRAGE ME!
HEED MY WORDS AND LET SITA GO! GO BACK HOME IN PEACE OR ELSE.....
HAH! WHAT WILL HAPPEN?
JATAYU FLUTTERED HIS MIGHTY WINGS AND FURIOUSLY CIRCLED THE CHARIOT.
THE ROARING RAGE OF RAM WILL BURN YOU AND YOUR RACE TO EXTINCTION!
HAH!
NOW JATAYU REALISED THAT WORDS ALONE WOULDN'T DO.
PULLING RAVAN BY THE HAIR, JATAYU YANKED HIM OUT OF THE CHARIOT.
THUD
RAVAN FELL HEAVILY DOWN TO THE GROUND.

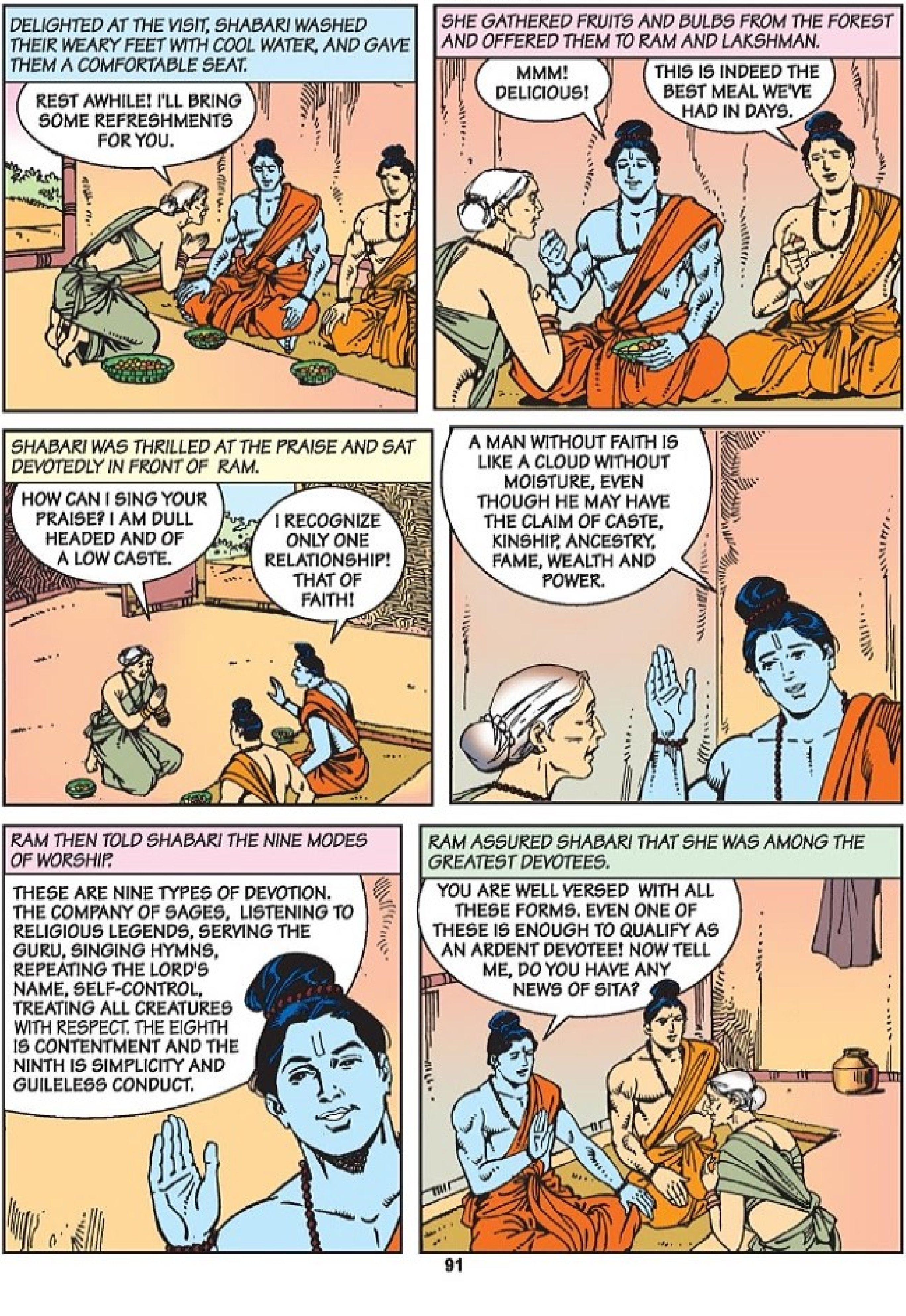

JATAYU CAREFULLY PLACED SITA IN THE SHELTER OF A TREE AND CONFRONTED RAVAN.
SWOOSH!
THUMP
THUMP
JATAYU HIT RAVAN REPEATEDLY WITH HIS BEAK.
FOR OVER HALF AN HOUR RAVAN LAY UNCONSCIOUS IN A SWOON BECAUSE OF THE BATTLE WITH JATAYU.
BUT WHEN HE CAME TO, HIS ANGER KNEW NO BOUNDS.
RAVAN DREW HIS SWORD AND CUT OFF THE WINGS OF THE BRAVE BIRD.
SWOOSH
SWISH
AHHH!
WOUNDED AND HELPLESS, JATAYU FELL TO THE GROUND.
RAVAN PULLED SITA BACK INTO THE CHARIOT AND SPED OFF. SHE WAS CRYING LIKE A HELPLESS HUNTED DEER, CAUGHT IN A TRAP.
OHH..! BOO HOO HOO
ON THE WAY, SHE SAW A GROUP OF MONKEYS, SEATED ON A HILL.
I'LL DROP ONE OF MY GARMENTS HERE! PERHAPS IT MAY HELP RAM TO FIND ME.
SWISH
RAVAN NOW FLEW NON-STOP TO HIS OWN KINGDOM OF LANKA. THERE HE PLACED SITA UNDER AN ASHOK TREE.
YOU ARE MY PRISONER NOW! YOU BETTER DO AS I SAY!

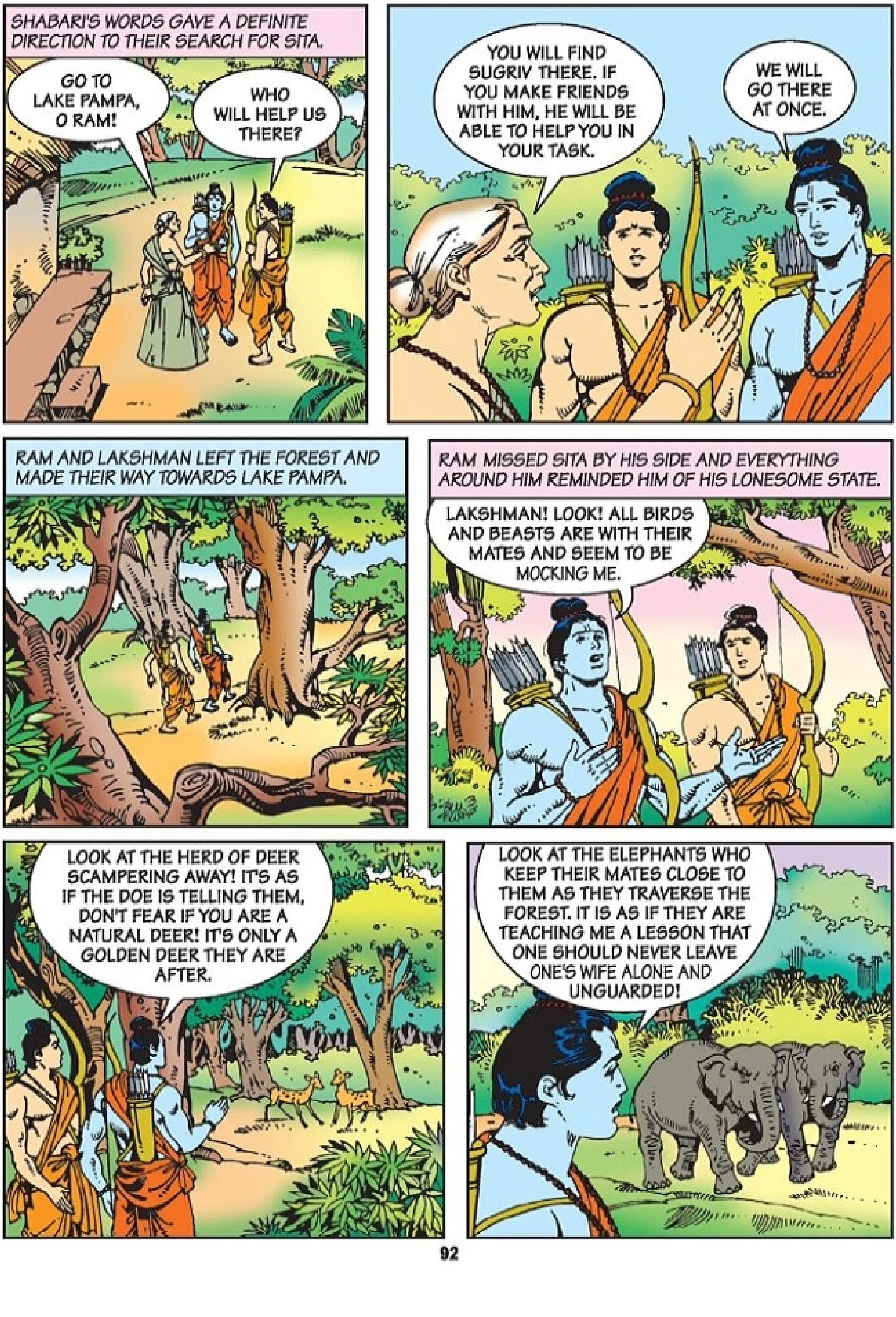

SITA SAT UNDER THE ASHOK TREE, REMEMBERING RAM AS SHE HAD SEEN HIM LAST, RUNNING AFTER THE GOLDEN DEER.
OH RAM! RAM!
RAM RETURNING TO THE FOREST HOME WAS SURPRISED TO SEE LAKSHMAN COMING TOWARDS HIM.
LAKSHMAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHY DID YOU DISOBEY ME AND LEAVE SITA ALONE?
I - I....
YOU KNOW THAT THE FOREST IS FULL OF FIERCE DEMONS! I FEAR SHE MAY NOT BE IN THE ASHRAM NOW!
FORGIVE ME, BROTHER! IT'S NOT MY FAULT
LAKSHMAN CLASPED RAM'S FEET AND BEGGED FORGIVENESS.
HURRY UP! LET'S GO AND SEE.
RAM AND LAKSHMAN FOUND SITA MISSING AT THE ASHRAM.
AGITATED BY HER ABSENCE, RAM BEGAN TO WAIL ALOUD.
OH MY BELOVED SITA! WHERE ARE YOU?
WE WILL FIND HER ! DON'T WORRY.
RAM WAS QUITE BESIDE HIMSELF AND BEGAN TO SPEAK TO THE BIRDS AND BEES OF THE FOREST.
O BIRDS AND DEER, O STRING OF BEES, HAVE YOU SEEN THE DOE- EYED SITA ?

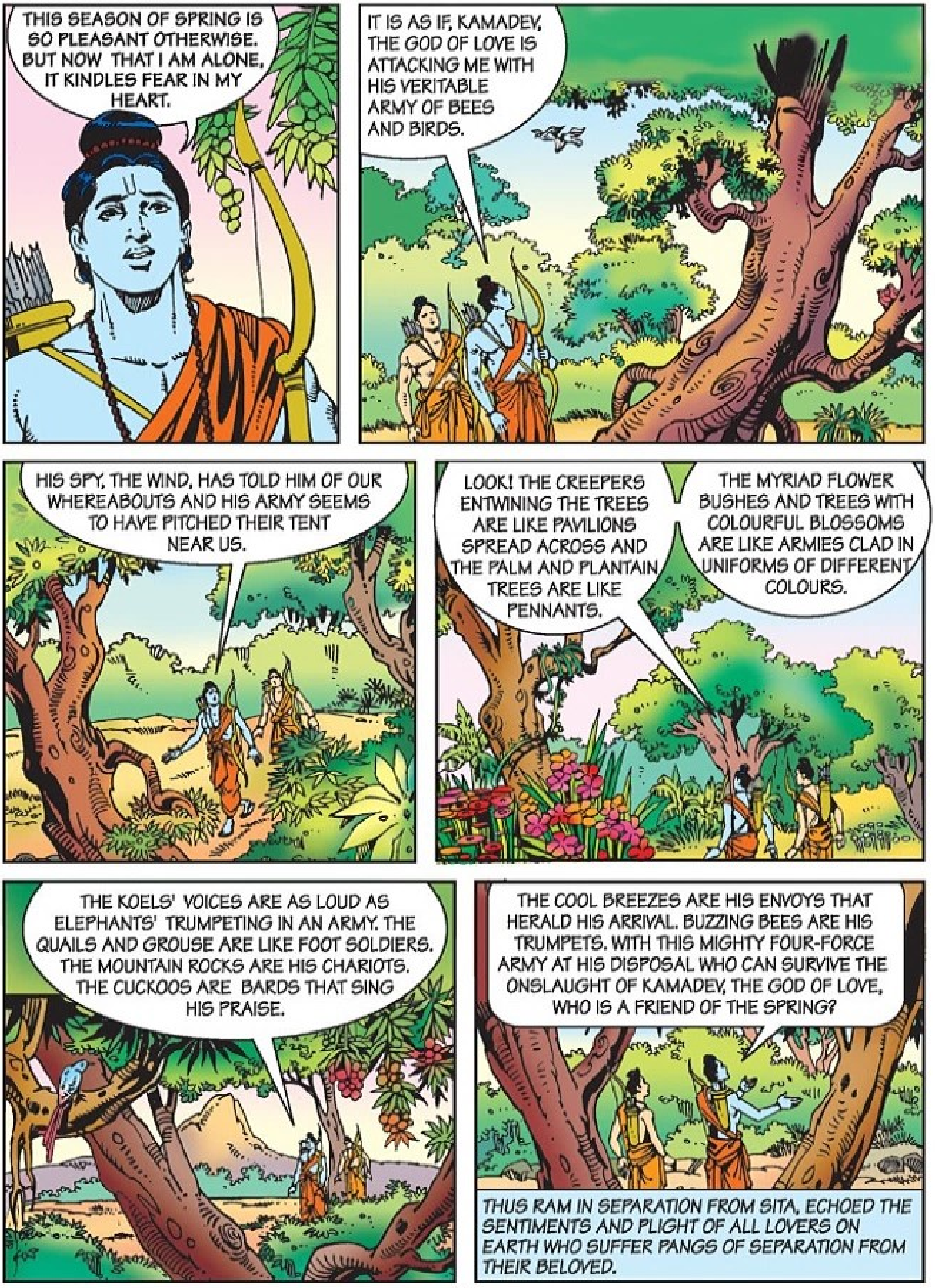

THOUGH WOEBEGONE, RAM WAS LYRICAL IN HIS LAMENTATIONS.
OH! JASMINE BUDS, AND POMEGRANATES, LOTUS AND LIGHTNING FLASH, YOU MAY NOW HEAR PRAISES ABOUT YOURSELF. FOR NOW, WITH SITA'S ABSENCE, YOU DON'T FACE ANY COMPETITION.
DEAR HEART! DON'T LET YOUR RIVALS WIN THE CONTEST! COME! TELL ME WHERE YOU HAVE HIDDEN YOURSELF!
RAM AND LAKSHMAN WALKED ALL AROUND THE FOREST, SEARCHING FOR SOME SIGN OF SITA.
LOOK! WHAT'S OUT THERE?
IT LOOKS LIKE JATAYU, OUR FRIEND.
THEY RUSHED AHEAD TO FIND THE VULTURE LYING INJURED ON THE GROUND, GASPING FOR BREATH.
OH! WHO HAS HURT YOU SO ?
LOOK! HIS WINGS HAVE BEEN CUT OFF!
JATAYU GATHERED HIS EBBING STRENGTH AND WHISPERED URGENTLY.
IT WAS THE TEN-HEADED ONE WHO WOUNDED ME.
OH! RAVAN! WHY DID HE DO THIS?
RAM BENT DOWN TO CATCH JATAYU'S WORDS.
HE IS THE ONE WHO CARRIED AWAY SITA!
OH! JATAYU RISKED HIS OWN LIFE TO SAVE SITA.

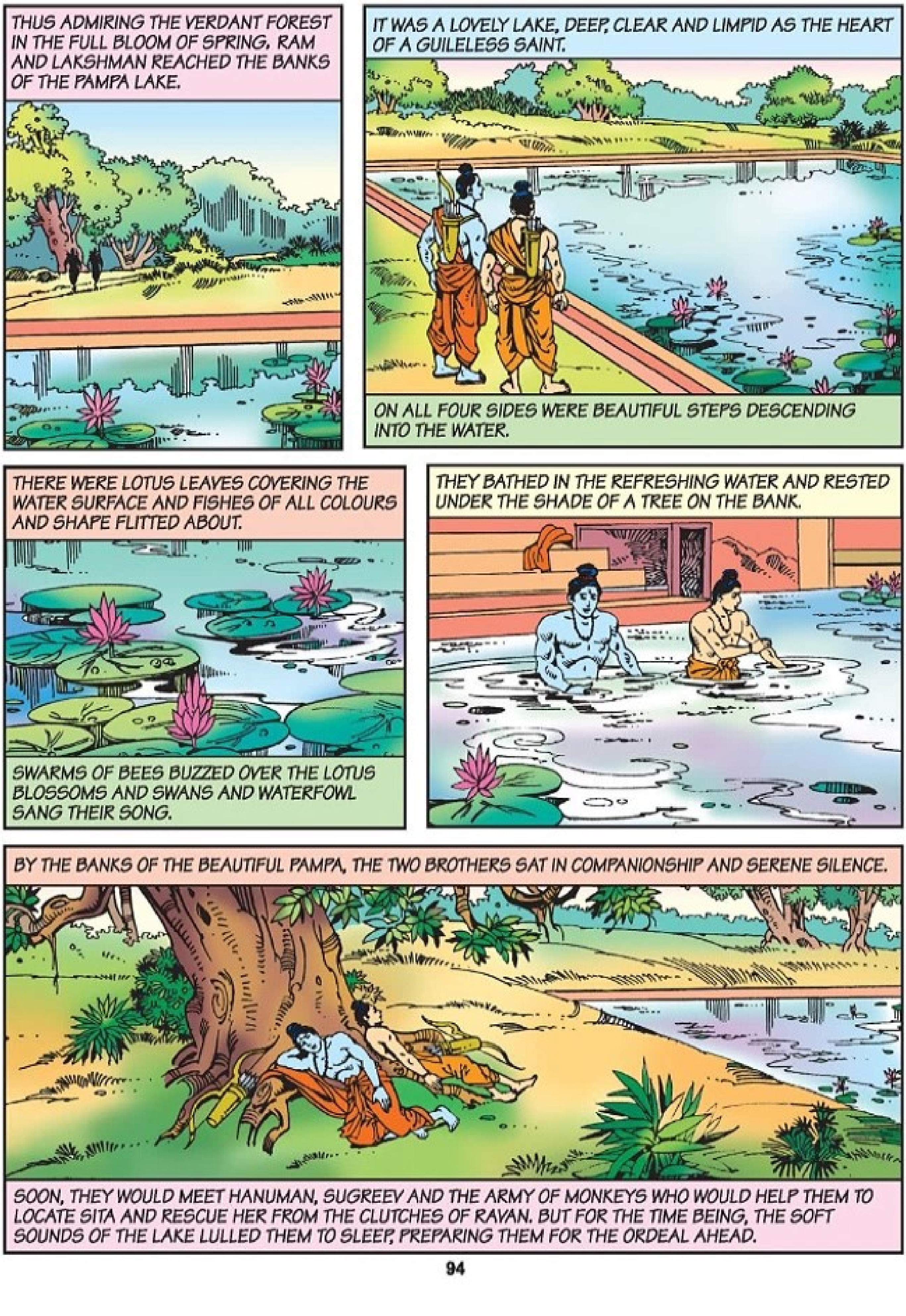

HE...HE TOOK HER TOWARDS THE SOUTH! POOR SITA! SHE WAS SCREAMING LIKE A HURT BIRD! I...I WAS HOLDING ON TO MY LAST BREATH TO TELL YOU.
BUT RAM REALISED THAT JATAYU'S END WAS NEAR.
JATAYU CLOSED HIS EYES AND A LOOK OF CALM APPEARED ON HIS FACE.
NOW I MUST BREATHE MY LAST.
NO, NO, MY FRIEND! YOU MUST NOT DIE!
FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SUCH A SELFLESS AND HELPFUL NATURE, SALVATION IS CERTAIN.
I WILL SEND THE TEN-HEADED ONE AND HIS ENTIRE FAMILY TO THEIR DEATH.
JATAYU DIED AND RAM PERFORMED THE LAST RITES FOR THE NOBLE VULTURE KING.
THEN THE TWO BROTHERS CONTINUED ON THEIR QUEST.
THE FOREST IS BECOMING MORE DENSE NOW!
YES! WE HAVE TO PUSH OUR WAY THROUGH THE THICKETS.


IN THE THICK JUNGLE, POPULATED BY MANY BIRDS, DEER, LIONS AND ELEPHANTS, THE TWO BROTHERS CAME ACROSS A STRANGE SIGHT.
IT WAS KABANDH, THE DEMON.
RAM EASILY OVERPOWERED HIM.
IT WAS THEN THAT KABANDH RELATED HIS TALE.
I AM A GANDHARV ACTUALLY! BUT IT WAS THE CURSE OF SAGE DURVASA THAT TURNED ME TO A DEMON.
NOW I HAVE BEEN RELEASED FROM THAT CURSE, I CAN GO BACK WHERE I BELONG.
FARE THEE WELL.
WHILE CROSSING THE JUNGLE, RAM AND LAKSHMAN REACHED THE SIMPLE ABODE OF SHABARI.
YOU HAVE COME! MY LORD!
SAGE MATANGA HAD ASSURED ME I WOULD MEET RAM BEFORE I DIE!
SHE ACTS AS IF SHE KNEW OF OUR ARRIVAL.


DELIGHTED AT THE VISIT, SHABARI WASHED THEIR WEARY FEET WITH COOL WATER, AND GAVE THEM A COMFORTABLE SEAT.
REST AWHILE! I'LL BRING SOME REFRESHMENTS FOR YOU.
SHE GATHERED FRUITS AND BULBS FROM THE FOREST AND OFFERED THEM TO RAM AND LAKSHMAN.
MMM! DELICIOUS!
THIS IS INDEED THE BEST MEAL WE'VE HAD IN DAYS.
SHABARI WAS THRILLED AT THE PRAISE AND SAT DEVOTEDLY IN FRONT OF RAM.
HOW CAN I SING YOUR PRAISE? I AM DULL HEADED AND OF A LOW CASTE.
I RECOGNIZE ONLY ONE RELATIONSHIP! THAT OF FAITH!
A MAN WITHOUT FAITH IS LIKE A CLOUD WITHOUT MOISTURE, EVEN THOUGH HE MAY HAVE THE CLAIM OF CASTE, KINSHIP, ANCESTRY, FAME, WEALTH AND POWER.
RAM THEN TOLD SHABARI THE NINE MODES OF WORSHIP.
THESE ARE NINE TYPES OF DEVOTION. THE COMPANY OF SAGES, LISTENING TO RELIGIOUS LEGENDS, SERVING THE GURU, SINGING HYMNS, REPEATING THE LORD'S NAME, SELF-CONTROL, TREATING ALL CREATURES WITH RESPECT. THE EIGHTH IS CONTENTMENT AND THE NINTH IS SIMPLICITY AND GUILELESS CONDUCT.
RAM ASSURED SHABARI THAT SHE WAS AMONG THE GREATEST DEVOTEES.
YOU ARE WELL VERSED WITH ALL THESE FORMS. EVEN ONE OF THESE IS ENOUGH TO QUALIFY AS AN ARDENT DEVOTEE! NOW TELL ME, DO YOU HAVE ANY NEWS OF SITA?


SHABARI'S WORDS GAVE A DEFINITE DIRECTION TO THEIR SEARCH FOR SITA.
GO TO LAKE PAMPA, O RAM!
WHO WILL HELP US THERE?
YOU WILL FIND SUGRIV THERE. IF YOU MAKE FRIENDS WITH HIM, HE WILL BE ABLE TO HELP YOU IN YOUR TASK.
WE WILL GO THERE AT ONCE.
RAM AND LAKSHMAN LEFT THE FOREST AND MADE THEIR WAY TOWARDS LAKE PAMPA.
RAM MISSED SITA BY HIS SIDE AND EVERYTHING AROUND HIM REMINDED HIM OF HIS LONESOME STATE.
LAKSHMAN! LOOK! ALL BIRDS AND BEASTS ARE WITH THEIR MATES AND SEEM TO BE MOCKING ME.
LOOK AT THE HERD OF DEER SCAMPERING AWAY! IT'S AS IF THE DOE IS TELLING THEM, DON'T FEAR IF YOU ARE A NATURAL DEER! IT'S ONLY A GOLDEN DEER THEY ARE AFTER.
LOOK AT THE ELEPHANTS WHO KEEP THEIR MATES CLOSE TO THEM AS THEY TRAVERSE THE FOREST. IT IS AS IF THEY ARE TEACHING ME A LESSON THAT ONE SHOULD NEVER LEAVE ONE'S WIFE ALONE AND UNGUARDED!


THIS SEASON OF SPRING IS SO PLEASANT OTHERWISE. BUT NOW THAT I AM ALONE, IT KINDLES FEAR IN MY HEART.
IT IS AS IF, KAMADEV, THE GOD OF LOVE IS ATTACKING ME WITH HIS VERITABLE ARMY OF BEES AND BIRDS.
HIS SPY, THE WIND, HAS TOLD HIM OF OUR WHEREABOUTS AND HIS ARMY SEEMS TO HAVE PITCHED THEIR TENT NEAR US.
LOOK! THE CREEPERS ENTWINING THE TREES ARE LIKE PAVILIONS SPREAD ACROSS AND THE PALM AND PLANTAIN TREES ARE LIKE PENNANTS.
THE MYRIAD FLOWER BUSHES AND TREES WITH COLOURFUL BLOSSOMS ARE LIKE ARMIES CLAD IN UNIFORMS OF DIFFERENT COLOURS.
THE KOELS' VOICES ARE AS LOUD AS ELEPHANTS' TRUMPETING IN AN ARMY. THE QUAILS AND GROUSE ARE LIKE FOOT SOLDIERS. THE MOUNTAIN ROCKS ARE HIS CHARIOTS. THE CUCKOOS ARE BARDS THAT SING HIS PRAISE.
THE COOL BREEZES ARE HIS ENVOYS THAT HERALD HIS ARRIVAL. BUZZING BEES ARE HIS TRUMPETS. WITH THIS MIGHTY FOUR-FORCE ARMY AT HIS DISPOSAL WHO CAN SURVIVE THE ONSLAUGHT OF KAMADEV, THE GOD OF LOVE, WHO IS A FRIEND OF THE SPRING?
THUS RAM IN SEPARATION FROM SITA, ECHOED THE SENTIMENTS AND PLIGHT OF ALL LOVERS ON EARTH WHO SUFFER PANGS OF SEPARATION FROM THEIR BELOVED.


THUS ADMIRING THE VERDANT FOREST IN THE FULL BLOOM OF SPRING, RAM AND LAKSHMAN REACHED THE BANKS OF THE PAMPA LAKE.
IT WAS A LOVELY LAKE, DEEP, CLEAR AND LIMPID AS THE HEART OF A GUILELESS SAINT.
ON ALL FOUR SIDES WERE BEAUTIFUL STEPS DESCENDING INTO THE WATER.
THERE WERE LOTUS LEAVES COVERING THE WATER SURFACE AND FISHES OF ALL COLOURS AND SHAPE FLITTED ABOUT.
SWARMS OF BEES BUZZED OVER THE LOTUS BLOSSOMS AND SWANS AND WATERFOWL SANG THEIR SONG.
THEY BATHED IN THE REFRESHING WATER AND RESTED UNDER THE SHADE OF A TREE ON THE BANK.
BY THE BANKS OF THE BEAUTIFUL PAMPA, THE TWO BROTHERS SAT IN COMPANIONSHIP AND SERENE SILENCE.
SOON, THEY WOULD MEET HANUMAN, SUGREEV AND THE ARMY OF MONKEYS WHO WOULD HELP THEM TO LOCATE SITA AND RESCUE HER FROM THE CLUTCHES OF RAVAN. BUT FOR THE TIME BEING, THE SOFT SOUNDS OF THE LAKE LULLED THEM TO SLEEP, PREPARING THEM FOR THE ORDEAL AHEAD.

पर हित सरिस धर्म नहि भाई
पर पीड़ा सम नहि अधमाई

There is nothing more pious than doing good to others. And there is nothing more wicked than causing harm to others.



पद कमल धोइ चढ़ाइ नाव न नाथ उतराई चहौं
मोहि राम राउरि आन दसरथ सपथ सब साँची कहौं
बरु तीर मारहुँ लखनु पै जब लगि न पाय पखारिहौं
तब लगि न तुलसीदास नाथ कृपाल पारु उतारिहौं

"I would like to wash the lotus-feet of yours. I do not expect any payment O Rama! I swear by your name and the name of Dasharath, I will get you across the river in my boat only after washing your feet."

